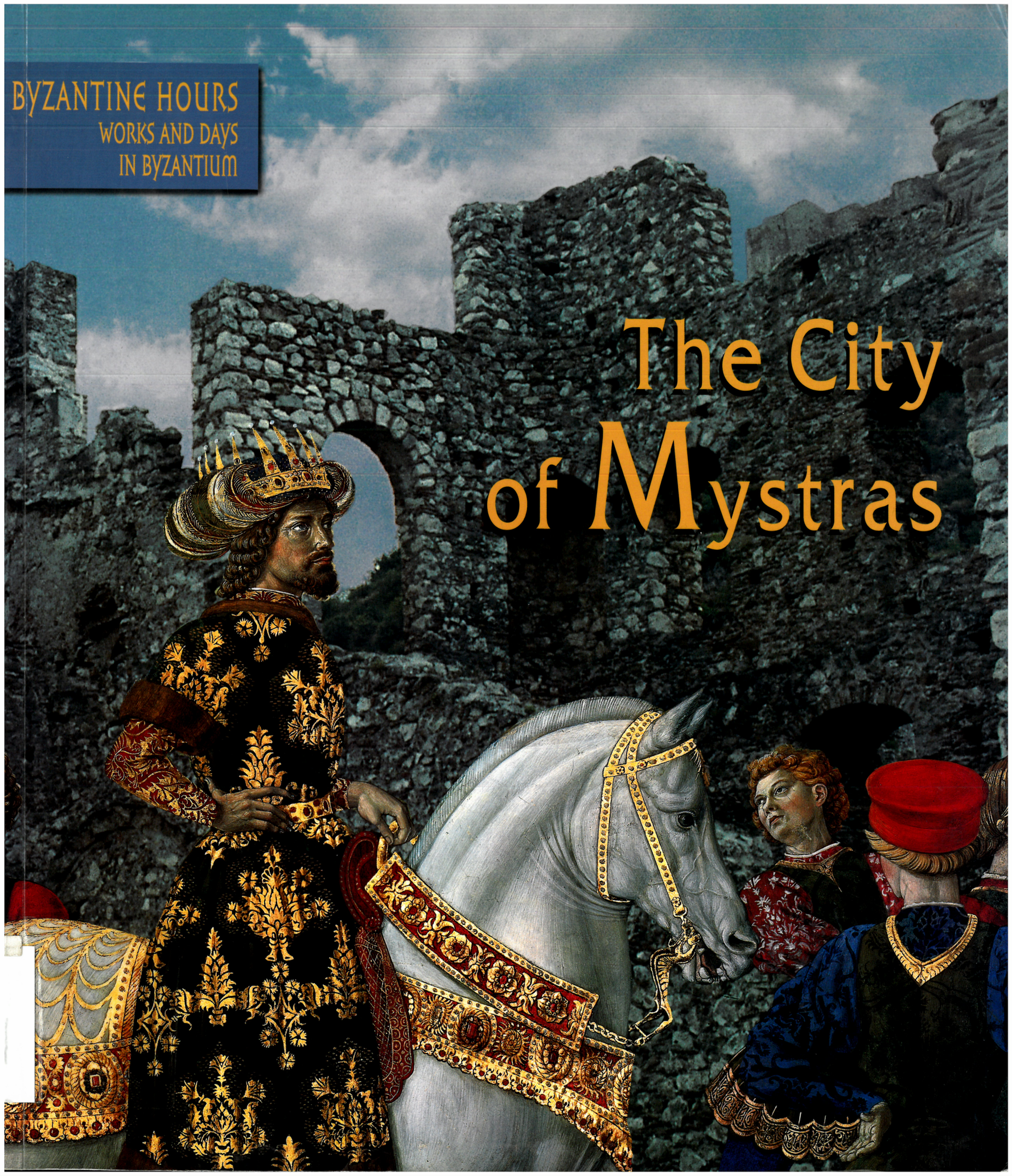
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The City of Mystras





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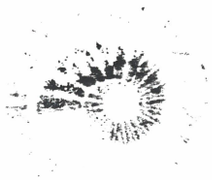
HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE

BYZANTINE HOURS

WORKS AND DAYS IN BYZANTIUM

ATHENS - THESSALONIKI - MYSTRAS 2001

The City of Mystras



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The logo of the exhibition, on first page, is based on a painting by Christos Bokoros.

The Byzantine heritage has been a basic component in the history of Hellenism over the centuries. Realisation and awareness of this has been a complex, slow process. It is therefore with particular gratification that I welcome the organisation of the exhibition "Byzantine Hours: Works and Days in Byzantium", which follows in the footsteps of other major exhibitions, such as "Treasures of Mount Athos", "The Glory of Byzantium", "A Mystery Grate and Wondrous". "Byzantine Hours" forms the kernel of an international cultural event that is unfolded in Greece. The multi-ethnic Byzantine empire bequeathed its cultural heritage to many peoples, and any exhibition devoted to it is inevitably an international event. Moreover, for this particular exhibition, objects have been requested on loan from all over the world.

The articulated exhibition "Byzantine Hours" is presented simultaneously in three cities: Thessaloniki, Athens and Mystras, and is one of the most comprehensive activities of "The Domain of Culture". New excavation finds and important exhibits from Greece and eighteen other countries are placed on display in these three cities, which are transformed into exhibition areas of a huge Museum –"The Domain of Culture". The Byzantine monuments and archaeological sites of these areas form the context for the exhibition. An exhibition with a unified concept, on which departments of the Ministry of Culture have collaborated harmoniously, along with foreign Archaeological Schools and forty-two foreign Museums.

Byzantium has succeeded in rallying all this dynamism around it. In the modern age, the values of Byzantine civilisation are evidently being reassessed and are more easily approached than at other periods. "Byzantine Hours" illuminates not only the ideology of the empire, but its everyday life, and from this point of view it advances a new working hypothesis.

I would like to congratulate and thank all those who have contributed to the exhibition, and hope that it will attract the attention of visitors from Greece and all over the world.

EVANGELOS VENIZELOS
Minister of Culture

Byzantium, the name given by scholars to the empire centred on Constantinople that evolved in the eastern Mediterranean, remained in the margins of history for many centuries after its dissolution in 1453, the victim of an ideological *damnatio memoriae* of differing origins and differing causes and serving different ends, depending on the place and period.

Byzantine art, with its symbolical, austere and spiritual character, provided an answer to demands of the late 19th century and responded to an unusual form of romanticism, attracting the attention of European scholars of this period. Thus restored to the limelight the empire that had until then been identified with decline, court intrigues and the predominance of religious superstition over rationalism and science. The cultivation of Byzantine studies has, with sober scholarship, restored the reputation of a multinational state, whose sound administrative organisation was based on its Roman heritage, its education and culture grounded in the Greek tradition and language, and its ideology closely linked with the official version of the Christian religion as crystallised at the Ecumenical Councils. At the present day, there are many peoples who look upon Byzantium as one of the factors in their history. Greeks, above all, regard the Byzantine period as a period of Greek history, a continuation of the Classical Greek past and the foundations of modern Hellenism. And not without cause, for during the last three centuries of its existence, in particular, the Byzantine empire was identified with the fate of the Greek people.

Over the last twenty years, important cultural occasions, such as exhibitions held in both Europe and America, have promoted the brilliant Byzantine art, attesting to its ecumenical character. Landmark events include the first major exhibition, entitled *Byzantine Art, European Art*, held in Athens at the Zappeion Hall in 1964, and the exhibition *The Glory of Byzantium*, mounted recently in the Metropolitan Museum of New York (1997).

For some time now the Greek Archaeological Service has been concerned to present, through the visual means of an exhibition, a global picture of Byzantine society and the culture it produced. And to provide answers to the questions what was Byzantium and why is its thousand-years-long history still of interest today.

The project has been a collective venture and the research and preparation involved

lasted several years. A co-ordinating role was played by the Directorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, with the participation of the Ephorates of Byzantine Antiquities, the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, and the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, and with a substantial contribution from the Numismatic Museum, and at last the articulated, multi-venue exhibition is ready. The event, which extends from Mystras to Athens and Thessaloniki, is organised around a number of axes, devoted to the themes of the ecumenical ideology of the Byzantines, the emperor as an expression of the ecumenical idea, Byzantine towns, everyday life in the towns and the countryside, and Byzantine fortifications. Archaeological finds from all over Greece are placed on display, the majority for the first time, along with important works of art from forty-two museums, collections and monuments in Europe and the United States. The exhibitions are supported by electronic media and printed catalogues, and there will be conferences, one-day meetings and lectures on the subjects dealt with by the exhibitions themselves. It is also planned to hold a number of artistic events.

Many people have contributed to the excellent organisation of the complex, multi-level event "Byzantine Hours" Scholars, technicians, conservators, administrative officials, and ancillary staff have worked together harmoniously, demonstrating yet again the dynamic abilities of the Greek Archaeological Service.

To each and every one of them are owed our thanks and congratulations, especially the Directors of the foreign museums and monuments who readily loaned valuable items from their collections. Of all these worthy colleagues and supporters, I feel it incumbent on me to single out the name of the Head of the Byzantine Museums Department and Director of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Despoina Evgenidou, who responsibly and most effectively shouldered the burden of the general co-ordination of "Byzantine Hours".

ISIDOROS KAKOURIS
Director of Byzantine
and Post-Byzantine Monuments

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ISIDOROS KAKOURIS
Director of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments

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Exhibition coordinator

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PROLOGUE

The Late Byzantine settlement of Mystras was organised after the middle of the 13th century on a hill in Mount Taygetos to the west of Sparta, and from 1348 on was the capital of the despotate of the Morea. It has all the characteristic features of a fortified urban centre of the time, and a careful urban layout. The site has a triple fortification system, with the castle-citadel on the summit of the hill and two series of walls lower down, and the urban tissue is well preserved, with small houses as well as archontika ("mansion-houses"), churches and monasteries, streets, cisterns, fountains, the religious centre focused on the cathedral, low down the hill, and the administrative centre higher up in the Palace, a building complex unique in Greece.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture is organising a celebratory exhibition with the title "Byzantine Hours", devoted to various aspects of the Byzantine empire. The exhibition will be presented simultaneously in three cities, Thessalonike, Athens and Mystras, two of which were preeminent centres of Byzantine culture and civilisation.



Mystras has responded to the challenge to present on this site the unit devoted to "A Byzantine town" by devising the exhibition "The example of Mystras".
The comprehensive nature of the evidence surviving in the town encouraged us to make use of the entire archaeological site and its individual features as exhibits. The following means were chosen to attain this end:
- Appropriate visual material devoted to an analysis of the individual features of the town has been devised and set on information panels placed on the site. This projection of the individual parts of the settlement is designed to make it easy to understand all the genuinely Byzantine and Post-Byzantine phases of the town. The fundamental subjects dealt with in the panels are the organisation of a Byzantine town, the services it provided for its citizens, and the functions it served. The information available on these subjects, which is set out on the panels, does not relate exclusively to Mystras, nor does it deal exhaustively with its subject. The visual material and texts included give a more general picture of the character of Byzantine urban centres.



- A number of internal rooms devoted to specialised functions has been reconstructed in an endeavour to recreate the atmosphere of the period and give visitors the attractive opportunity to enter a Byzantine house, or the Palace kitchen.
- Finally, visual aids and original building material have been displayed on the ground-floor of the Palaiologan wing of the Palace, in order to give some idea of the specialist craftsmen who made a fundamental contribution to the creation of the town, and also of the concern shown in modern times to conserve and enhance it.

Another unit, "Byzantium and the West. The experience of a Late Byzantine urban centre", which is also part of the exhibition "Hours of Byzantium", is presented in the Museum on the Archaeological Site of Mystras.

The Museum occupies part of a building dating from 1754, which was the Archbishop's Residence at that time. It was converted into a Museum in 1951 by Nikolaos Drandakis, then curator of antiquities, and housed finds that came mostly from the site of Mystras. Many of them were collected by the nuns of the Pantanassa Convent, while others were yielded by excavations. Some notable, though fragmentary, sculptures were displayed in the ground-floor room and the small courtyard, and a room on the first floor was devoted to objects of minor art, pottery, icons and fragments of clothing and wall-paintings.

The reorganisation of the permanent exhibition in the Museum, involving new themes and a fresh museological and museographical approach was dictated by the need to present the latest results of research. The stimulus was provided by Mystras's participation in the exhibition "Byzantine Hours".

2



3



1. The hill of Mystras with the Taygetos range in the background.

2. The Museum is part of the building complex of the Metropolis. It was organised in 1951 by Nikolaos Drandakis.

The aspiration of the museological programme underlying the reorganisation of the exhibition is to define as far as possible the relations and contacts between eastern Europe and the West, seen in the context of the specific historical background and the prevailing political situation of the time. These relations supplied the stimulus for influences operating in both directions, which are reflected in the historical process of the period and delineate the distinctive personality of its art, cultural life, and political and social reality.

Communications between Byzantium and the West are an old story, a continual process of give and take, from which emerged European civilisation. This dynamic relationship, which evolved over time, can be seen in the social reality of Mystras. The exhibits define categorically the society from which they are derived and approach the subject of contacts between a Late Byzantine centre and the West through three broad themes:

- the dress worn by the upper class, a basic feature of daily life.
- western influences on artistic output and
- outstanding intellectual figures who lived at Mystras and made a vital contribution to the process that led to the Renaissance.

The major exhibits on display for the individual units are:

- a dress ensemble produced by an excavation in Hagia Sophia in 1955 and recently conserved at the Museum of Art and History in Geneva.
- relief plaques of Kantakouzenos for which recent research has yielded significant new evidence.
- manuscripts either copied in the capital of the despotate, such as the Tzykandyles manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, or which were found in and probably related to Lakonia, like the codices from the archives of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta.
- manuscripts from the Marcian Library in Venice associated with the figure of Bessarion, which will for a short time adorn the town in which he lived and in which he took a particular interest.

The archaeological site of Mystras has for many years been the object of attention by the Greek state, has clearly attracted the interest of the public, and received worldwide recognition in 1989, when it was included in the Worldwide Heritage List approved by UNESCO; the exhibition "Byzantine Hours" will assist visitors to come to a deeper understanding of the site, and will at the same time offer them a warm welcome.

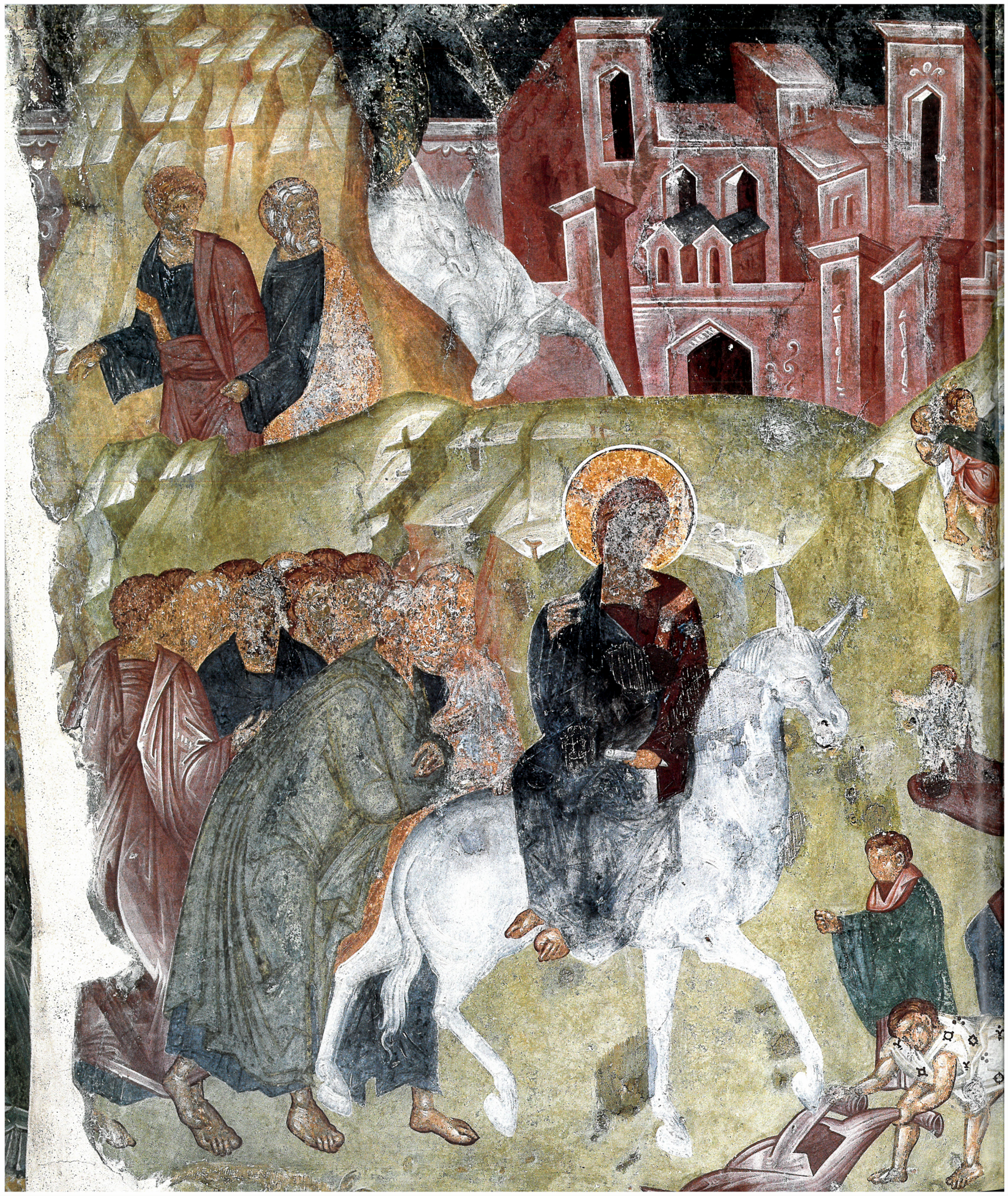
I would like to express my warm thanks to all those who have given their support to this project. First to His Reverence the Metropolitan Bishop of Monemvasia and Sparta, Eustathios, and also the Directors of the Ambrosian Library, Milan, and the Marcian Library, Venice, who have honoured us with their trust in loaning important treasures from their collections. Also, the Committee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras, its president Professor Stephanos Sinos and the architect Georgia Marinou for their unstinting and constant support.

EMILIA BAKOUROU
Archaeologist
Director of the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

3. The Museum building in the courtyard of the Metropolis complex.

4. View over the valley of Mystras from the Pantanassa convent.







5. Depiction of a Byzantine town, rendered by a painter apparently familiar with western expressive means. Entry into Jerusalem. Wall-painting. circa 1430. Mystras, Pantanassa.

6. Mosaic floor with a depiction of the Holy City of Jerusalem. 6th. c. Jordan, Madaba.

6



Byzantine Towns

The study of the Byzantine town and the changes, alterations and modifications to which it was subjected, in accordance with the prevailing political, economic and social circumstances at the various phases of the long history of the Byzantine empire, is one of the major problems facing historians. The historical approach to this urban phenomenon, as we know, is continually renewed, as the theoretical, methodological and substantive issues are redefined, and has to face all the difficulties involved in the examination of complex problems.

The foundation of Constantinople in the 4th century shifted the centre of gravity of the Roman empire to the East, where there had long been a strong urban tradition. The early Byzantine town inherited its site, institutions and functions from the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman world, but over the roughly three centuries, from the 4th to the 7th, that the Early Byzantine period lasted, a number of changes and modifications occurred that were of definitive importance in securing the transformation from the city, with institutions and beliefs rooted in antiquity, to the medieval town (Spieser 1984, pp. 315-340).

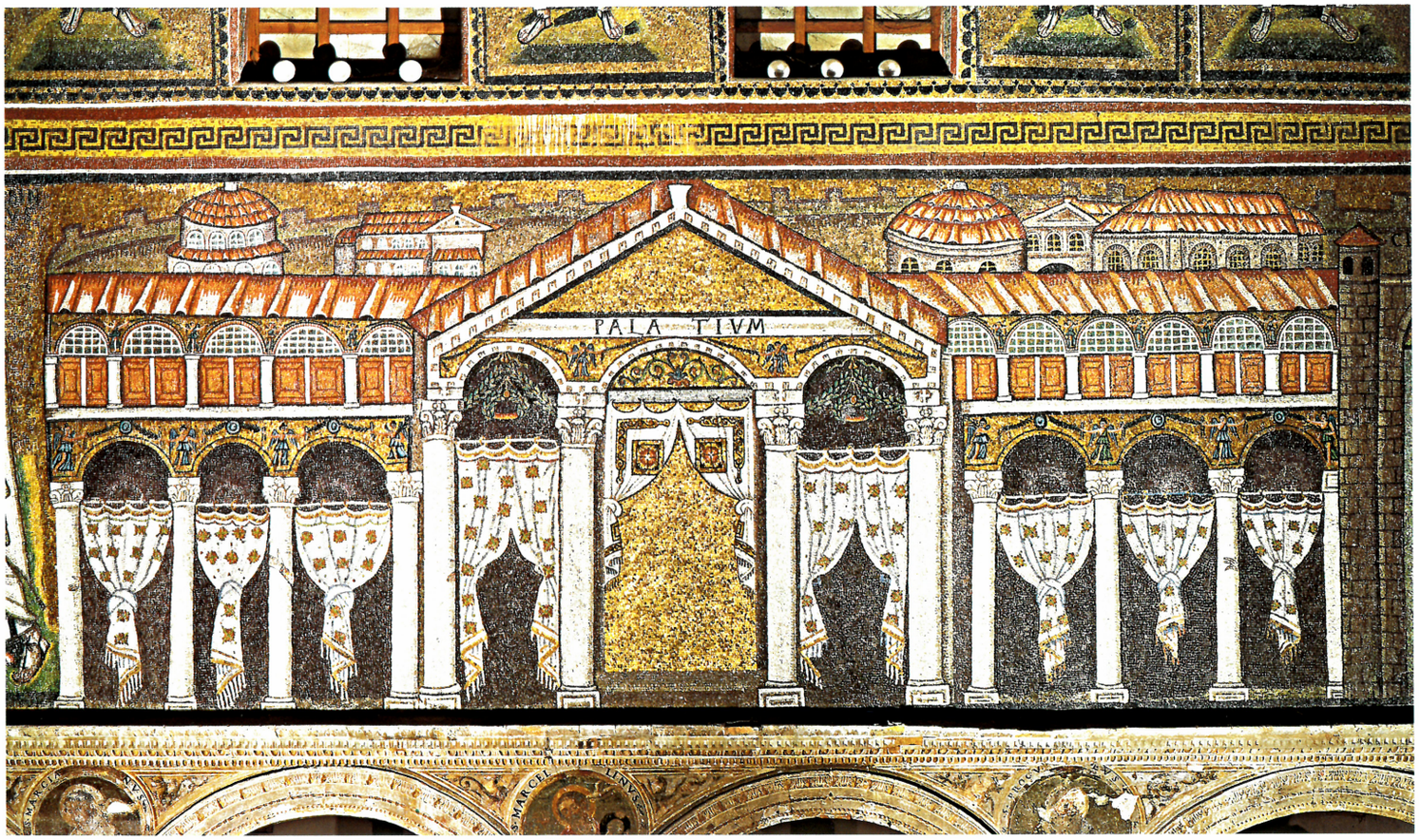
The emperors of the Early Christian centuries placed restrictions on the liberties and income of the towns, ranked them in a hierarchical network, and made them part of a provincial administrative system designed to facilitate state control. Their importance henceforth was determined not so much by the towns themselves as by the role imposed upon them by the imperial administration. A settlement may be designated a "town" if it meets certain conditions regarding its form and function: it should be fortified, there should be a market (agora or forum) at its centre that still retained its monumental form with secular and religious buildings, the population resident in it should be engaged in activities unconnected with agricultural production, and it should be a place in which the agricultural produce of the immediate surrounding countryside was assembled, sold and exchanged. The 6th century treatise on political geography known as the *Synekdemos of Hierokles* draws a distinction between Constantinople and the provinces with their capital cities and ordinary towns (Koder 1986, pp. 155-179). Only the large towns still played the role of administrative, economic and cultural centres, while as time went on, the smaller settlements began to show signs of abandonment and decline.

The large towns in the empire underwent considerable development down to the middle of the 6th century, especially those that were provincial capitals and metropolitan sees. The ruling powers, imperial representatives, both political and military, the bishops of the towns, local notables and wealthy landowners all intervened and took an interest in the towns and their inhabitants. As fortified administrative and ecclesiastical centres, the towns retained the steadily changing monumental aspect they had inherited from the Greco-Roman period. As Christianity penetrated the towns it added a new note and "while not being the cause of the transition from the ancient to the medieval urban landscape, coloured the transformation" (Dagron 1977, pp. 3-25) Christianity modified the monumental aspect of the towns and has at the same time contributed to the great changes that were brought about, while the bishop played an important role in managing the ecclesiastical revenues, which were constantly on the increase. From the 6th century on the town centres began to be inundated by ecclesiastical buildings, and brilliant residences for large landowners and community notables were also erected in the towns. At the same time, the function of many buildings changed in order to meet the needs of the new times. The changes that are to be noted at various points in the urban landscape may be seen as stemming from activities carried on in the new context of social adjustment. Co-

7. Depiction of a palace at Ravenna, a large urban centre in Byzantine Italy. Mosaic. circa 500. Italy, Ravenna, San Apollinare Nuovo.

8. View of the interior of Hagia Sophia, the centre of Orthodox Christianity, 6th c., Constantinople.

7



rinth, which has been revealed and displayed to good effect by systematic excavations over many years, is a good example. At the beginning of the 5th century, the fortification walls that were erected enclosed one third of the area of the Classical city; the destroyed amphitheatre, the function of which was no longer in keeping with the new beliefs, was left outside them. The Christian cemeteries were also created outside the walls. The forum, the upper and lower parts of which were linked by a monumental staircase, continued to house public buildings, and the renewal of the town centre attempted at this time did not disturb the ancient urban tissue. There is evidence for commercial activity at various points of the town. The shops on the street leading to the port of Lechaion reflect the commercial and craft-industrial activities of the inhabitants of the town (Scranton 1957). In Ephesus, at the time of Justinian, private workshops were built in the large public areas in the forum and the surrounding streets (Foss 1979).

Towns and their immediate surrounding area were closely linked and mutually complementary, in that the agricultural produce derived from working the large farms was a main factor in the wealth of the towns. At the same time the sea was at this period becoming a means of communication and assisted the circulation and distribution of agricultural produce, laying the foundations for the development of coastal towns. The large urban centres were very densely occupied: Antioch had a population as high as 200,000, while Alexandria, Ephesus and Thessalonike had 100,000 each. Moreover, a provincial capital in Greece had about 30,000-35,000 inhabitants.

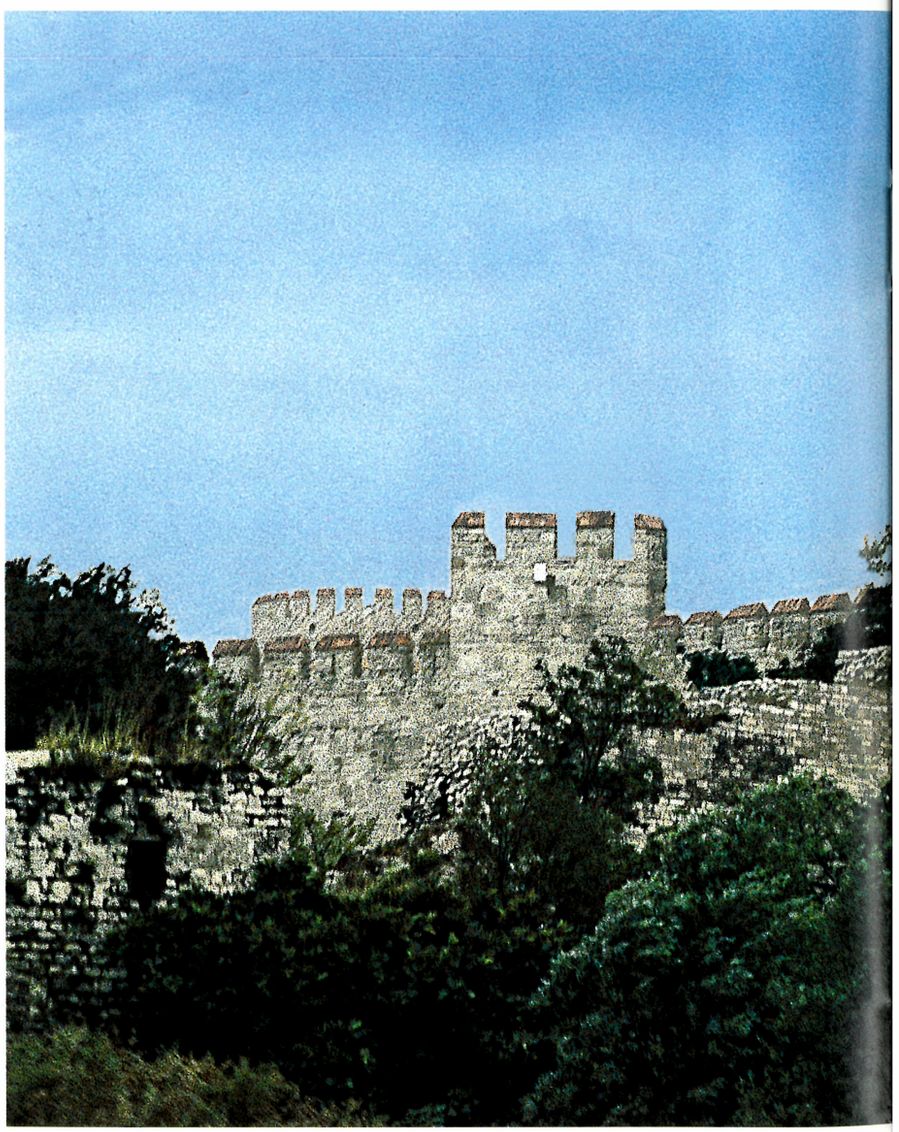
The decline of the towns became apparent in the late 6th century, and the phenomenon became general throughout the


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entire empire in the 7th century. The urban population dwindled, circulation of coins fell, and the volume of goods carried, and therefore of commercial transactions was confined to a minimum. This was the beginning of the so-called "dark ages". Political, economic and social changes and problems led to a transition and the transformation of the ancient city into the medieval castle-town (Müller-Wiener 1986, pp. 435-465). Towns contracted or were moved to different sites, and some disappeared, while others survived only in a rudimentary form (Brandes 1989, pp. 80-131). The reversion of the urban centres to rural status is to be seen everywhere. The people who lived in the castle-towns left every morning to work in the countryside, as Theophanes notes. This period saw the final collapse of the social and economic structure of the ancient cities, which lost the land that belonged to them, and also the brilliant class of councillors, who left for the capital or took the cloth (Loungis 1996, pp. 35-67). Authority in the provinces was no longer exercised by Constantinople through the vehicle of the towns, but through local military forces under the control of the themes, which from the late 7th century on were converted into a system of local administration and defence.

The recovery from this contraction of the provincial towns observable in the 7th and 8th century was a protracted process. From the 9th century onwards, particularly in the Balkans, the literary sources once more speak of towns, some of which were revived and preserved, with certain elements of their old form modified, while others were built as new towns. This revival of the urban centres reflects the dominant role of the Byzantine state machine, the administrative personnel and military forces of which were the driving force behind the economic mechanisms, while at the same time the Church and the local aristocracy also contributed to the development of the towns (Angold 1985, pp. 1-37).

The literary sources shed scarcely any light on our knowledge of the urban design of Middle Byzantine and Late Byzantine towns, though it is possible, from the results of archaeological investigation, to form a rough, though revealing picture of their plan. Fortifications were the main feature of the towns, and some writers refer to them indiscriminately as "town" or "castle". In the 11th century, Kekaumenos, in his *Strategikon*, refers to Demetrias as a *fortified town* and as a *castle*. The identification of the concepts town and fortifications, and also the requirement that there should be a large number of inhabitants, emerges clearly from the *Epinikios Logos* compiled by Nicholas, bishop of Methone in the 12th century for Manuel Komnenos, after his town had been destroyed by the Normans. In it, he states: *The town of Methone... was once a town, but is now a deserted site, bereft of citizens, bereft of fortification walls, and bereft of the security provided by them* (Avraméa 1979).



9. Parts of the fortifications of Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine empire.

It is evident from specialised studies that Middle Byzantine towns did not have any logical disposition of spaces and buildings; they had no town plan, that is, and the evolution of the urban tissue was a dynamic rather than a planned process (Mango 1976). The urban tissue was constrained by the already existing situation in the settlement, which had changed completely (Bouras 1998, pp. 89-97). Those ancient cities that survived and functioned during the Middle Byzantine period, such as Athens, Corinth and Thebes, and also Nicaea, Smyrna and Attaleia, were reconstructed, using both new and old material, with a different structure and on a different scale. Account should be taken, however, of the principle that the history of towns is a history of special cases and each should be studied separately. In general, Byzantine towns may be said to present the following picture. The town and the citadel were kept separate for security reasons. The streets were narrow, the houses built closely together, though occasionally scattered, and frequently next to the town walls,



9



10. According to the Byzantines, the earthly city reflected the heavenly model. Icon with a depiction of the allegory of the Heavenly Jerusalem. circa 1500. Kerkyra, Platyteras Monastery.

and the dead were now buried inside the towns. Numerous small churches were erected in the settlements and monasteries. Shops were located at the sides of the streets and workshops, such as pottery kilns, glass-factories, and metal and silk workshops, were set amongst the houses (Bouras 1974, pp. 30-52).

Most towns in the Middle Byzantine period occupied strategic sites and developed alongside major roads controlling communications with the interior and with the coasts. They were surrounded by fertile countryside and had large markets and ports for exports. The towns in the Balkans, in particular, experienced economic growth driven by intensive agricultural and industrial production, and their goods were channelled to the ports for export.

In the Middle Byzantine period, in the 11th and 12th century, there was significant economic growth in the urban centres, connected with the increase in agricultural output (Harvey 1997, pp. 347-393). A major role within the towns was played by the notables, that is, the rich landowners who frequently occupied positions in local government, by the representatives of the central authority, and also by the ecclesiastical hierarchy –metropolitan bishops, bishops and monks. At the same time, merchants from the Italian cities, which were granted privileges by the emperors from the end of the 11th century on allowing them to trade freely in the ports of the empire, increased the demand for agricultural produce. Merchants from Amalfi, Venice, Pisa and Genoa are recorded in the towns and ports of the empire, in Constantinople, the coasts of Asia Minor and Thrace, in Thessalonike, Dyrrachium, Demetrias, Halmyros, Thebes, the Euripos, Corinth, Sparta, and elsewhere. As has already been observed, there were larger numbers of Italian merchants in the ports of the European provinces of the empire than in those of the Asia Minor provinces.

In Asia Minor, Nicaea in Bithynia is referred to as *of ancient wealth and populous*, while Smyrna, Ephesus and its port, Miletos and Pergamon were rebuilt. Systematic excavations conducted in part of Pergamon have revealed the different uses of and furnished dates for the building phases of the structures, demonstrating the lack of any urban design (Rheidt 1991). At Sardis, the area inside the walls was rebuilt in the 10th and 11th century: small houses, built one next to the other, belong to the settlement that extended over the plain, beneath the citadel.

In the European provinces, Thessalonike, the second city of the empire and a point of contact between the two worlds of East and West, had fortification walls and a citadel, wide streets and wealthy houses, and was an administrative and commercial centre that had an annual fair, an extensive hinterland and a sheltered port. It was also a cultural centre enjoying an urban way of life and, as a city "protected by God", had a distinctly religious character. The literary sources praise Thessalonike as *the famous city, the most outstanding of almost all the western cities, the jewel of Greece and the eye of Europe* (Konstantakopoulou 1996). A large number of settlements in central Greece and the Peloponnese were regarded as towns. The most advanced of them were Thebes, seat of the theme of Hellas and centre of an extensive, fertile, agricultural hinterland, Corinth, seat of the theme of the Peloponnese, and Patras, Argos, Methone, and others. The commercial and industrial sector of Corinth, with its numerous pottery, glass and metal workshops, was the kernel of the town in the 11th and 12th century. The prosperity of the town is attested by the large number of shops and the renovation of its ports. Luxury silk fabrics are known to have been manufactured here and at Thebes, where archaeological investigation has also identified the dyeing workshops. Thebes was densely occupied in the 12th century, with settlements outside the walls and numerous churches. Sparta, too, where a large number of coins has come to light and the settlement extended outside the walls, enjoyed great economic growth, with Jews playing a role in textile manufacture. Patras was also a centre of commerce for the agricultural produce, especially grain, olive oil and wine, which were also exported through its port. Little is known of Athens and its economy, though the increase in the number of coins in circulation points to commercial growth. In the 11th century a new wall, the Rizokastro, was built to protect the area around the Acropolis, where the administrative and religious centre was located. Industrial goods were produced inside the town, and also in a number of areas outside the fortified centre, in the Dipylon and the temple of Olympian Zeus (Bouras 1981, pp. 617-627).

10

The changes brought about by the dissolution of the empire by the Franks in 1204 and the introduction of Latin rule, and also the recapture of Constantinople, affected the form and functioning of the towns. At the time of the Palaiologoi there was a strong tendency towards the decentralisation of the administration; the officials governing the large administrative areas (*κατεπανίκια*) were drawn from amongst the men close to the emperor, most of them members of the local aristocracy. At the same time the power of the local military forces was increased, further strengthening the trend to decentralisation and bolstering the independence of the towns (Maksimović 1981, pp. 149-188). The inhabitants at this period were engaged mainly in farming and trade, with industry in decline. The towns may be classified on the basis of their form and function into "castle-towns", "trading-towns", and towns that had a multiplicity of functions. The large towns of the Late Byzantine period, in addition to Constantinople, that is Thessalonike, Mystras and Ioannina, were administrative, military and commercial centres (Laïou 1980 A, pp. 237-243). The main features of the towns were their strategic location and their fortifications, with the prime role being the military one, though there was also a strong community of notables, who were called "the powerful" and who were usually members of the aristocracy. Stout fortification walls bounded the urban space, and a double row of walls separated off the residential areas, following the social stratification of the town. The churches inside the towns were important points of reference for social life; in the larger towns the neighbourhoods were centred on the churches, in whose grounds the inhabitants gathered in order to meet each other and socialise (Kioussopoulou 1993, pp. 279-287).

Servia, a typical castle-town that controlled the pass from Macedonia into western Thessaly, is described by John Kantakouzenos as a large town with three lines of fortifications and a citadel that was *δυσπρόσοδον πανταχόθεν* (difficult of access on all sides). The twin, or "double-headed" castle of Ioannina, a castle with two citadels, of which the north-west citadel was the *upper goulas*, was protected by the lake. The *asty* (town) of Epiros was outstanding in terms of its size, strong site, and number of inhabitants, according to a chrysobull issued in the year 1319. Ioannina entered upon its period of greatest prosperity with the foundation of the state of Epiros in the 13th century. Its wealth was based on privileges wrested from the despots of Epiros and the Byzantine emperors by the powerful *kastrinoi* (castle-dwellers) *of Ioannina*, who made themselves effective lords of the town and imposed their influence in the affairs of Epiros. They formed an aristocracy and were the *most official and well-established men* according to the *Chronicle of Ioannina* (Vranousis 1968). Adrianople in the Hebros valley, occupied a strategic site that was at the end of the major routes leading from central Europe to Constantinople and from there to the East. At the same time, merchandise from the Black Sea, the Propontis and the Aegean was also brought to the town. The town was sourounded by a double wall and at the end of it was the castle where the officials of the town resided; between the walls lived the town notables. The commercial quarter, *emboreion,* evolved outside the walls (Asdracha 1976).

Of the Late Byzantine towns whose economy was based mainly on trade, a characteristic example is furnished by Monemvasia on the east coast of the Peloponnese. The *god-protected castle* was built on a rock with sheer sides that ended in a plateau, on which was the upper town with the governor's residence, the houses of the notables and the churches, the most important of which in the Palaiologan period was the Panagia Hodegetria (Maksimović 1990, pp. 92-115). The lower town, which from the 11th century spread over a narrow strip of land by the sea and was flanked by the twin harbours, was linked with the mainland by a bridge with twelve arches. Here developed the most important centre of the carrying trade in the Peloponnese, and one of the largest ports in the Eastern Mediterranean. The sailors, merchants and pirates of Monemvasia, the *people most adept at sailing and working on the sea* according to an astute comment by Andronikos II Palaiologos, exploited the privileges ceded to them by the Byzantine emperors to develop trade in Constantinople, Asia Minor, the Black Sea, Macedonia and Thrace, and the Aegean, and entered into commercial relations with the Venetians in the Peloponnese and Crete. The wine produced by their native town, the famous *vinum Malvasiae* or Monemvasia wine (Shakespeare's malmsey), was the most important export and object of trade (Kalligas 1997, pp. 80-81).

11



11. The Byzantine capital in a water-colour from a manuscript by Cristoforo Buondelmonti. 1420. Gennadeios Library. American School of Classical Studies.

The town of Mystras was founded under special historical circumstances. The castle was built in 1249 by the Frankish conqueror of the Morea, William II Villehardouin and passed under Byzantine control in 1262. Its naturally strongly position and strategic importance were factors in the development of the town, which for the next two centuries was the brilliant capital of the greek despotate of the Morea, and a political centre with a highly developed social and economic life. Mystras had close links with Constantinople and also turned to the West and exercised considerable influence on the international politics of the time, developing into a unique intellectual, cultural and artistic centre (Zakythinos, 1975, vol. II).

The urban and architectural forms of Mystras were dictated by the distinctive features of the town, including the nature of the terrain, which made the development of the settlement possible. A winding road led from the lower town to the castle on the top of the hill. From the earliest kernel of settlement on the summit, where the citadel was located, the fortification walls descended the hill and, with the aid of another defence wall, formed a triangle in which was sited the palace of the despot, the functions of which were associated with the royal court, and also the houses of the notables. A large rectangular square in front of the palace, the Byzantine forum, was the site of the administrative and economic centre of the town.

The general layout of the space and the architectural perception are thought probably to have been influenced by the urban design of the Italian cities (Chatzidakis 1993, Bouras 1997, pp. 76-77). The houses of the bourgeoisie were built lower down the hillside. The increase in the population led to a further expansion of the town outside the walls.

Quite apart from the form of the settlement, which provides a picture of the political and social structures of the town, and apart, too, from the incomparable wealth of art treasures housed in its churches and monasteries, the foundation of Mystras is still a symbol of the revival of the Greek element and gives fullest expression to the new form taken by Byzantine Hellenism.

ANNA AVRAMEA
Professor of Byzantine History
University of Crete

12. General view of the castle-town of Mystras.

12



A Byzantine town: the example of Mystras

In the context of the exhibition Byzantine Hours, and the presentation of the subject of Byzantine Towns, Mystras is for visitors a tangible example of a Late Byzantine urban centre, the built environment of which is preserved in fairly good condition and is able to furnish a wealth of information about life in the town.
The entire town and also some of the individual features of the settlement, such as fortifications, gates, houses, churches, fountains, etc., are treated as an exhibit, and provide the starting point for a presentation of their role and importance in Byzantine urban life. Near the selected "exhibits" have been placed panels containing explanatory texts –which are also included in the catalogue– and visual materials. These cast light on the organisation of Byzantine towns, the services they provided for the inhabitants, and the functions that were carried out by the urban centres of the period.
The following subjects are dealt with: the criteria involved in the selection of a site for the building of a town, the layout and protection of an urban settlement, circulation inside it, the water-supply and drainage systems, the town as an administrative centre and, finally, the town as a place of worship, residence, commercial and industrial activity, burials, and social gatherings.

Each subject is presented at more than one location within the site. For example, panels providing information about the water supply of Byzantine towns

13. Plan of Mystras (Millet 1910, pl. 1). 13

have been placed at points were structures associated with the water supply of the settlement are preserved, such as an aqueduct, fountains, cisterns, underground pipes, etc. All the panels relating to the same basic subject contain a common general text, and each also provides additional specific information about the "exhibit" in question. The visual material and the texts accompanying it form a third level of information, giving greater detail, related frequently to Mystras itself. The accompanying texts are often extracts from documents of the period, which greatly assist visitors to understand the exhibit. The contents of the panels, which are organised in a hierarchy of levels moving from the general to the specific, allows visitors to make their own choices and read them in a free manner, either confining themselves to the general or going into greater detail in the case of a subject in which they are more interested. The use of visual materials also helps to demonstrate the function of some of the structures very vividly, and to associate the "exhibits" with their natural users, the people whose lives were bound up with them.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that the information provided on the panels, which has also been incorporated in the present publication accompanying the exhibition, does not relate exclusively to Mystras, which was simply the starting point and illustrative example, but concerns all Byzantine towns, and the castle-town in particular.

LEGEND

A. Acropolis of Mystras, the first kernel of the town and the last line of defence.

B. Upper Town dominated by the palace complex, the seat of the secular authority.

C. Lower Town, the seat of the ecclesiastical authority and the home of various craft-industrial and commercial activities.


A
B
C

Chronological table

The history of Mystras

1249

William II Villehardouin builds a castle on the summit of the naturally strong hill at Mystras.

And when he thoroughly searched all those parts,
he found a strange hill, severed from a mountain,
a little more than a mile above Lakedaimon.
Because he greatly wished to make a fortress
He stopped outside the hill and built a castle,
and he named it Myzethra, because that is how it was called
And built a brilliant castle and made a great fortress.

Chronicle of the Morea
(Kalonaros 1966, vv. 2985-2991)

1259

Battle of Pelagonia. The Byzantines defeat the Franks and William II Villehardouin is taken prisoner.

1262

William II Villehardouin is set free, after ceding the castles of *Monemvasia, Maine* and *Myzethra* to the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos as ransom. The inhabitants begin to move from Lakedaimon to Mystras and the castle-town gradually takes shape.

1289

The seat of the provincial governor (*kephale*) of the Peloponnese, appointed by Constantinople, is transferred from Monemvasia to Mystras.

1349-1380

Manuel Kantakouzenos, second-born son of the Byzantine emperor John VI, becomes the first despot of Mystras.

1383

The imperial dynasty of the Palaiologoi assumes responsibility for the administration of the despotate, under Theodoros I Palaiologos.

1407-1443

The great personal interest taken by the despot Theodoros II Palaiologos and his Italian wife Cleopa Malatesta provides an impulse to the already flourishing intellectual life of Mystras.

1408, 1415

The emperor Manuel II Palaiologos visits the despotate. In order to consolidate its defences, he builds the Hexamilion wall across the Isthmus. Despite this, the forces of Turahan bey reached the walls of Mystras (1423).

1443-1448

The despot Constantine Palaiologos undertakes the military and administrative reform of the Peloponnese. He is proclaimed emperor in 1448, probably in the Metropolis at Mystras, and travels aboard a Catalan ship to Constantinople for the final battle of the empire against the Turks.

1452

The philosopher George Gemistos Plethon, an exponent of the idea of Greek national identity, dies at Mystras. Shortly afterwards his bones are taken to Rimini in Italy.

1460

Demetrios Palaiologos, the last despot of Mystras, surrenders the castle to the sultan Mohamed II.

1460-1540

Mystras, the capital of the Turkish sanjak of the Peloponnese, is an important centre of silk production and the silk trade of the eastern Mediterranean.

1687

The Venetian Morosini captures the town, which continues to be an important economic centre, with a population of about 42,000 inhabitants.

1715

The Turks recapture the Peloponnese.

1770

Mystras is ravaged by Albanian mercenaries in the service of the Ottoman empire, in response to the revolutionary movement inspired by the Russian Orloff brothers. The town enters upon decline.

1834

King Otto builds the modern town of Sparta, to which the inhabitants of Mystras move. The steady abandonment of the castle is accelerated.

1921

Royal decree declaring the Byzantine "necropolis" of Mystras an outstanding Byzantine monument.

1953

The site is expropriated by the state and the last inhabitants leave the castle.

1989

Mystras is included in the UNESCO list of the Worldwide Heritage after a decision by the appropriate committee.

14. Painting of Mystras, showing the main monuments and exhibition areas (by Markos Kambanis).

14



LEGEND

1. *Acropolis*
2. *Upper Gate*
3. *Hagia Sophia*
4. *Little Palace*
5. *Hagios Nikolaos*
6. *Palace*
7. *Monemvasia Gate*
8. *Pantanassa*
9. *Phrangopoulos Residence*
10. *Peribleptos*
11. *Hagios Georgios*
12. *Hagios Christophoros*
13. *Laskaris Residence*
14. *Lower Gate*
15. *Hagios Demetrios (Metropolis)*
16. *Museum*
17. *Evangelistria*
18. *Olive-press*
19. *Hagioi Theodoroi*
20. *Hodegetria (Aphendiko)*

● *Exhibition areas*
▬ *Cobbled alleyways*



THE FOUNDATION OF A TOWN

The predominant consideration in the castle-towns of the Byzantine period was the demand for security, and strong sites were therefore naturally selected for their foundation. Another basic concern was the need to secure a supply of drinking water, which was directly connected with the ability to hold out against protracted sieges. Proximity to fertile agricultural land, which provided the town with its essential living space, was a further factor of importance in the choice of site. The existence of a quarry and forests, to supply stone and timber, facilitated the building of the town.

Mystras, built on a steep, naturally well-defended hill, fulfilled the requirement for security. Drinking water was also available, since there are natural springs in the area and rainfall is frequent. Mount Taygetos provided the basic building materials, in the form of a variety of stone and timber. The ruins of medieval Sparta were an additional source of building material. The fertile plain of the Eurotas river, which was directly controlled by the castle, supplied the town with agricultural and stock-breeding produce.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bouras 1981, pp. 642-644. Dennis 1985, p. 30. Moutsopoulos 1997, pp. 56-57. Osterhout 1997, pp. 193, 196.

A.M.

15. The summit of the hill of Mystras is dominated by the Acropolis built by the Franks.

16. View of the town of Mystras, showing the Acropolis, the inner wall and part of the Lower Town.

17. Engraving from a book by Bernard Randolph. 1685. Gennadeios Library. American School of Classical Studies.



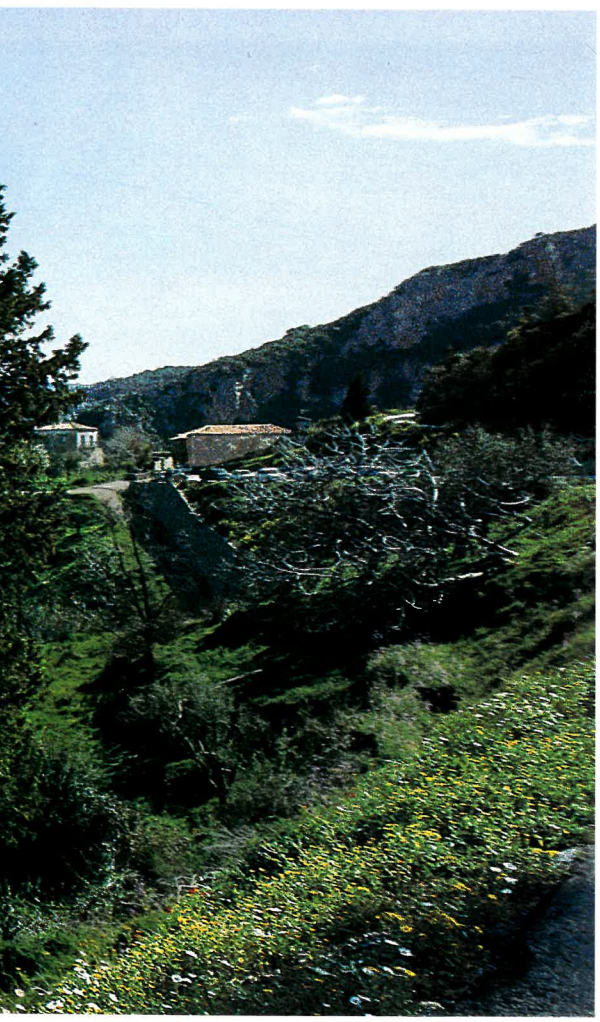
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17





THE LAYOUT OF THE SETTLEMENT

The spatial organisation of Byzantine fortified settlements followed a basic tripartite form: the citadel occupied the summit of the naturally strong hill, with two successive lines of defence lower down the slopes, defining and separating the "upper" and "lower" town. The urban tissue was laid out within these stout enclosure walls. The main streets were associated with the gates in the walls and also with the buildings housing the administrative and ecclesiastical authorities, and they also defined the residential areas. The houses occupied every nook and cranny of fortified towns, and the characteristic feature of these settlements was their picturesque irregularity. An element of functionality and logic was lent by the respect shown for certain building laws and practices.

Mystras is a typical Late Byzantine castle-town, with a tripartite articulation. The initial erection of the castle on the summit was followed by the gradual concentration of population on the sides of the hill, which led eventually to the creation of an extensive, well-defended settlement protected by two stout enclosure walls. The inner of these bounded the Ano Chora *(Upper Town) , that is the part of the town extending from the citadel-castle to the palace and housing the administrative centre and residences of notables.*

Lower still spread the second, larger residential zone, known as the Kato Chora *(Lower Town), which was enclosed by the outer fortifications. This included the cathedral and a number of fine monasteries, the residences of distinguished officials, and a large number of other houses.*

Outside the walls, the Exo Chora *(Outer Town) was occupied by the rural population, which took refuge in the castle in times of danger.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Angold 1985. Bouras 1981, pp. 638-642. Bouras 1998. Dunn 1994. Durliat 1990. Loungis 1996. Sinos 1999, col. 404-416.

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FORTIFICATIONS: SECURITY IN THE TOWNS

18



18. The fortified town of Thessalonike. Detail from an icon of St Demetrios. Late 16th-early 17th c. Kerkyra, Antibouniotissa Museum.

19. Fortified town. Detail from the Entry into Jerusalem. circa 1430. Mystras, Pantanassa.

20. The present main gate of the castle.

21. A stout tower protects the Upper gate of Mystras.

Byzantine towns are invariably closely associated with a fortification system. The towns of the early centuries of Byzantium, which were built on flat land usually on the site of earlier settlements, and the later castle-towns that made their appearance from the 7th century onwards, were fortified according to the principles of Greco-Roman fortress design. In some cases, indeed, the previous fortifications were simply repaired.

The kernel of the fortifications was the citadel, set at the highest point of the town. Protection of the settlement was secured by one or two defensive enceintes strengthened with towers. Gates secured communication between the town and the surrounding countryside.

Byzantine fortifications reflect the slow evolution of the art of war. The deep line of cleavage in fortress design brought about by the invention of gunpowder and cannon in the 14th century is apparent in Greece only in the later large, coastal Venetian castles.



19

Gates

The need for security meant that the towns had only a limited number of gates. These were usually of small dimensions, to prevent large numbers of soldiers gathering in front of them during attacks and sieges. They were considered to be one of the most vulnerable points of the defences, and towers were essential to strengthen them. A tower built above the gate, as here in Mystras, or two towers, one on each side, afforded space in which to deploy defensive forces to protect it. They also facilitated the use of military war machines such as the *catapult, ballistra* (a kind of catapult) and *lykos* (a grapple for neutralising the battering-ram). The last-named was particularly effective in countering the battering ram.

20



21



Walls

In castle-towns, the natural defences were supplemented by man-made fortifications. Cylindrical, semicylindrical, square or polygonal towers were erected at intervals to strengthen the walls. Machicolations were also created from which defenders poured boiling water, oil or lead on the attackers. The chemin de ronde, a narrow passageway along the battlements, allowed the soldiers freedom of movement, gave access to the upper floors of the towers and, in time of war, made it possible for them to deploy. For added protection, particularly in the towns of the early Byzantine centuries, which were built in flat areas, a moat was dug in front of the walls, and in some cases was designed to be filled with water.



22

Fortified monasteries

The fortified tower of the Peribleptos Monastery houses the monastery refectory on the ground floor and is at the same time an element in the outer fortifications of the town. At this point, the outer town wall serves to protect the monastery, the ancillary rooms of which are built in contact with it.

23



24

Citadels

The citadels of Byzantine castle-towns served as a last line of defence in case of enemy attack. The citadel was the headquarters of the garrison and housed the residence of the garrison commander. Its organisation was predicated on a supply of drinking water. This was usually achieved by collecting rainwater in large cisterns.
The citadels also had look-out posts, called *vigles*, built at the highest point of the town in order to command a view over the surrounding area.
The citadel of Mystras had a double line of defence.

Soldiers in the town

The town garrison, which consisted of the majority of the soldiers, lived in the citadel. At the same time, there were military units at other parts of the town. Within the palace there was probably a special room that served as a billet for the garrison. Soldiers charged with police duties were also posted on the walls and gates. These men checked people entering the town and also kept order inside it. In peacetime, the soldiers had the right to live in the defence towers, in which ancillary forces were also billeted in periods of military conflict.
During the Palaiologan period the army was manned by foreign mercenaries, Turks, Latins, Albanians, while when the Byzantine empire was at its height, the soldiers were drawn from the Byzantine population.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Andrews 1978, pp. 159-182. Bartusis 1997. Evgenidou 1997. Karayiannopoulos 1992, pp. 70-90. Karpodini-Dimitriadi, 1990 pp. 84-101. Orlandos 1958, pp. 134-137. Sinos 1999, col. 404-405.

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22. Tower of the fortification walls incorporated into the defences of the Peribleptos Monastery. Mystras.

23. The inner fortification wall of the town. Detail of the chemin de ronde. Mystras.

24. View of the fortification walls of Mystras.

25. The watch-tower in the citadel of Mystras.

26. View of the citadel.

25





26

27



MOVEMENT ABOUT THE TOWN

In the large cities and towns of Late Antiquity (4th-6th century), the Roman system of two intersecting avenues that ended at the gates in the walls was retained along general lines. The rest of the streets were laid out parallel with them.

In the Byzantine castle-towns, practical considerations related to the nature of the terrain dictated departures from the strictly geometrical layout of streets. The main axis in the settlement was called the royal, despotic *or* middle *street. Around it evolved a network of streets called* amphodoi, rymai, *or* stenopoi, *which were of an irregular, labyrinthine nature and frequently culs-de-sac, of varying width.*

In contrast with the Early Christian carriageways, the streets of the fortified settlements, known in modern Greek as kalderimia *(cobbled alleys), were not suitable for wheeled traffic.*

28



27. Animals were one of the main forms of transportation inside castle-towns. Detail from the Entry into Jerusalem. circa 1430. Mystras. Pantanassa.

28. Litters were also used to help the inhabitants move around in comfort. Skylitzes manuscript (cod. Vitr. 26-2, fol. 102r). 13th c. Spain, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional.

Streets

In Mystras, the steep slopes and narrow cobbled streets were not suitable for the use of carriages and made it difficult for the inhabitants to move around.
Within the castle, movement about the Lower Town was served by a main street running parallel with the walls and by cobbled alleys leading up the hill and linking this street with the gates to the Upper Town. This basic street network also linked the public buildings of the town –the palace, cathedral and monasteries. The streets ranged in width from 1.50 to 3.5 m. A large number of smaller streets branched off them, leading to the houses and other individual buildings.

29



The streets of Mystras frequently passed underneath the upper storeys of private houses, thus acquiring covered sections. These were called *diavatika,* and were necessitated by the lack of space within the walls, the dense building, and the need to secure free passage.

29. One of the cobbled alleyways of Mystras.

30. The Monemvasia gate links the Upper and Lower Town of Mystras.

30



Diavatika – Faltsogonies

Byzantine town-planning regulations were concerned to secure freedom of movement within the castle-towns. One of the measures taken to this end was to create vaulted areas on the ground-floors of houses that were for public use and gave passers-by freedom of passage. These passages were called *diavatika, parodoi, basternia, dromikes,* or *demosies kamares*. To facilitate movement in the narrow, winding alleys, it was also a common practice to chamfer the corners of the lower parts of houses. These features, called *faltsogonies* in modern Greek, made the street wider in places.

Security – Street maintenance

Byzantine legislation placed particular importance on securing unimpeded movement about the streets of the towns. State officials, the eparch of the city (*eparchos tes poleos*) in the case of Constantinople and the *praetor* and *astynomos* for the provincial towns, were responsible for the main streets and attended to their maintenance, cleaning, the provision of light at night-time, and the necessary repairs to the street surface. A special tax was levied on citizens to pay for paving the streets.

In Byzantine fortified towns, in which the unity of the settlement and the road network was interrupted by the inner fortification wall, communication between the upper and lower town was secured by gates, such as the Monemvasia Gate at Mystras. These gates made it possible to seal off the upper town in time of need and isolate it from the rest of the inhabited area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bouras 1981, pp. 640-641, 644-645. Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. IV, pp. 318-341. Mango 1990, p. 78. Moutsopoulos 1997, pp. 34-35. Sinos 1999, col. 410-411, 412, 413. Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, pp. 80-85.

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31

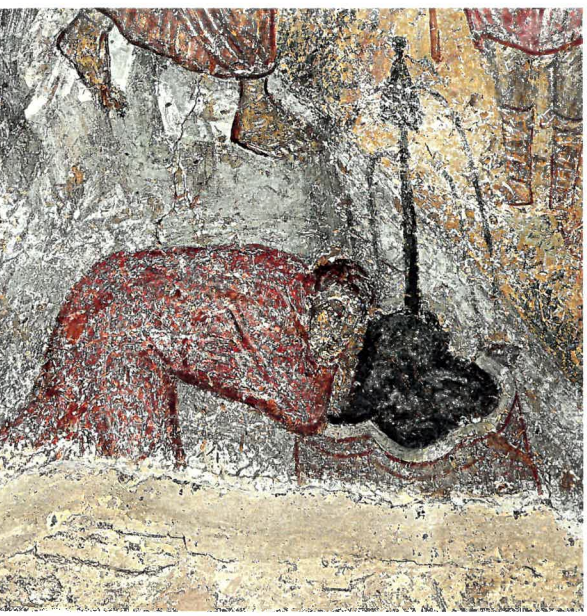




32

THE WATER-SUPPLY

33



The Byzantines built their towns, and also the smaller settlements, forts and monasteries, in areas that had a supply of drinking water –that is, near springs, rivers and lakes. The need to bring the water from the spring to the town and channel it to all the neighbourhoods called for the construction of major water-supply works. At the end of the 4th century, efforts to satisfy the needs of the increasing population of Constantinople led to the water-supply network being extended more than 100 km. to the west of the city. The scale of these works in the later castle-towns was more limited, and they were of a kind that usually required simpler forms of intervention. Rain water was commonly collected and used. The securing of a supply of water in the towns was undoubtedly a constant preoccupation of the Byzantine empire.

31. The chamfered corners of the ground-floors of buildings made it easier to transport goods around the town. Mystras, Upper Town.

32. Diavatika secured public passage in fortified towns. Mystras, Lower Town.

33. Open cistern with a strobilion. Detail from the Healing of the Paralytic Man. circa 1315. Mystras, Hodegetria.

34. Closed, built cistern in the shape of the Greek letter Π. Detail from the Entry into Jerusalem. circa 1430. Mystras, Pantanassa.

34



35. *Part of the aqueduct of Mystras outside the walls.*

36. *The large, semi-subterranean cistern of Hagia Sophia, with two mouths through which water was drawn. Mystras, Upper Town.*

Aqueducts

Aqueducts were used by the Byzantines wherever the nature of the terrain allowed. These arched structures carrying the channel in which the water was transported spanned valleys and ravines to bring drinking water to the towns. They were a Roman invention, and some of the most important aqueducts that are still preserved are in fact Roman structures. The Byzantines normally repaired and used earlier, Roman aqueducts. More rarely, in order to supply water to towns that were new foundations, they constructed new ones, as at Mystras. The erection of aqueducts was carried out by skilled engineers and experienced craftsmen.



35



36

Cisterns

The cistern of Hagia Sophia, built at a high point of the Upper Town of Mystras, is one of the largest in the castle. Large cisterns are often found in the monasteries in Byzantine towns. Many of them, like the Blatadon Monastery and the Monastery of the Hagioi Apostoloi in Thessalonike, were supplied with water by aqueducts and served as vital points in the water-supply system of the town, with pipes leading from them and carrying drinking water to the various neighbourhoods. Public cisterns were usually in the upper town or the citadel, for reasons of security during times of

37. Underground water pipes.
Mystras, Lower Town.

38. Elaborate marble well-head. 14th c.
Monemvasia castle.

war. Most of them were supplied by rain water. At Mystras, as at other towns, there were also private cisterns. These were naturally smaller and were built in the basements of houses, to which rainwater was channelled by a system of pipes running from the roof.



37

Water pipes

The underground clay pipes at Mystras, which can now be seen on some of the streets in the castle, formed part of a central water-supply network, the extent and precise course of which are still unknown. The water-supply systems of large Byzantine cities such as Constantinople, Thessalonike and Antioch, which evolved on the sites of earlier Hellenistic and Roman cities, are very extensive and complex. When the water came to the city it was collected in large open or closed cisterns. From these it was distributed to the various neighbourhoods by a network of underground pipes. In the castle-towns, the predominant urban form after the 7th century, networks of underground pipes are quite limited in extent and normally to be found alongside other forms of water-supply, that made use of private cisterns, for example.



38

39. Public fountain of rectangular shape. Turkish period. Mystras, Lower Town.

40. Public fountain in the shape of the Greek letter Π. Probably of Byzantine date. Mystras, Upper Town.

41-42. Ceramic chamber-pots. Thessalonike.

43. Toilet in a house, raised one step above the level of the triclinium, with an opening for lighting and ventilation. Mystras, Lower Town.

Fountains

The fountains of Mystras consist mostle of rectangular closed water-tanks, with one main face from which the water flowed. They were erected mainly in the Turkish period, in public places and also in the courtyards of houses. There were fountains in Byzantine towns from the Early Christian period onwards, according to contemporary writers. Very little is known of their form, however, since relevant archaeological finds are very scanty. They seem commonly to have taken the form of a kind of drinking fountain (*phiale*) –an open, usually hemispherical bowl into which the water fell from a vertical metal pipe with spouts, called the *strobilion*. Open reservoirs of simpler construction were also used.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bouras 1981, pp. 611-653. Dimakopoulos 1971, pp. 486-490. Dimitriadis 1983, pp. 423-443. Karpozilos 1989. Mango 1976.

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39



40



THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM

In the large towns household waste was carried off through a combined system of private and public sewage pipes. Responsibility for maintenance of the public sewage pipes fell to the same authority responsible for the maintenance of the street. Citizens who used the pipes had to pay a public tax. Where the nature of the terrain made it difficult to organise a drainage network, or where no measures had been taken to create one, waste was collected in pits at the edge of each individual property. The pits might be hermetically sealed or designed to allow the water to seep away into the soil. Associated legislation reveals the legislator's concern to secure public health and at the same time to protect the rights and property of the citizens.

Toilets, cess-pits...

In castle-towns like Mystras, the matter of drainage was usually dealt with on an individual basis: some of the houses had their own cess-pits, while in others the waste was channelled off in the open. Sinks and toilets are often to be found in the wealthier residences at Mystras. Toilets were built in a nook in the triclinium and resembled what are now known as "Turkish toilets".
Drainage holes at the foot of walls, another feature of the system, made it easier to clean floors and helped to improve sanitary conditions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Karpozilos 1989, pp. 335-352. Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. IV, pp. 330-331. Orlandos 1937, pp. 79-80. Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, pp. 88-91. Sinos 1999, col. 488-489.

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41



42 43

THE TOWN AS ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE

Byzantine towns served as the headquarters of the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Constantinople, the capital of the empire, was the home of the emperor's palace, the headquarters of the central administrative machine, and of the Patriarchate, the seat of the supreme ecclesiastical authority. Many other towns in the empire were provincial administrative centres that also housed the headquarters of the local metropolitan and episcopal sees.

44



Secular administration – Palaces

The seat of the imperial administration was the palace. The transference of the capital of the empire to Constantinople in the 4th century was marked by the construction of the Great Palace. Palaces were also erected outside Constantinople, particularly during the final period of the empire's life, when the fragmentation of the state led to the creation of autonomous or semi-autonomous regions with their own administrative centres (Trebizond, Arta, Nicaea, Thessalonike and Mystras).

Mystras, the capital of the despotate of the Morea, acquired a palace, the present form of which derives from successive additions in the 13th-15th centuries. It is a complex of austere, rectangular buildings standing on a large plateau in the Upper Town, and fulfilled a range of functions, with bedrooms, banquet rooms, reception rooms, administrative offices, storerooms, and so on.

45



44. The emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos ceded privileges by chrysobull to the Brontocheion Monastery. Depicted in the monastery katholikon. 1312/3-1322. Mystras, Hodegetria, SW chapel.

45. View of the north wing of the palace.

46. The palace dominates the plain of Sparta. The west wing of the palace of the Palaiologan period, now restored, can be seen.

47. Palaiologos wing. The niche for the throne.

46





47

48. General view of the Metropolis complex.

49. The double-headed eagle, was an emblem of the imperial family of the Palaiologoi and of the despots of Mystras. First half of the 15th c. Mystras, Metropolis.

48



Ecclesiastical administration – Metropolis

...reflect on Nikephoros the builder and prelate



The seat of the Metropolis of Lakedaimonia, which was restored after the Frankish period, was transferred to Mystras after the middle of the 13th century. The cathedral, dedicated to St Demetrios, was built at the side of the main street in the Lower Town, probably by the bishop Eugenios. Around it were the ancillary buildings of the see. The buildings that can be seen at present date from a later period.

The new Metropolis, in the headquarters of the despotate of the Morea, held a powerful position amongst the metropolitan sees of the Peloponnese. With it were associated several enlightened prelates, such as Nikephoros Moschopoulos, and Neilos or Loukas Sougdaias, who were the focus of intense intellectual and artistic activity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Chatzidakis 1993, pp. 25-45. Kavvadia-Spondyli 1984, pp. 48-57. Orlandos 1937, pp. 11-52. Runciman 1986. Sinos 1987, pp. 105-128. Id. 1999, col. 380-518, 472-483. Vasilikopoulou 1987-1988, pp. 193-207.

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50. View of the sanctuary of the Metropolis of Mystras.

51. Detail from the Last Judgement. Early 14th c. Mystras, Metropolis.

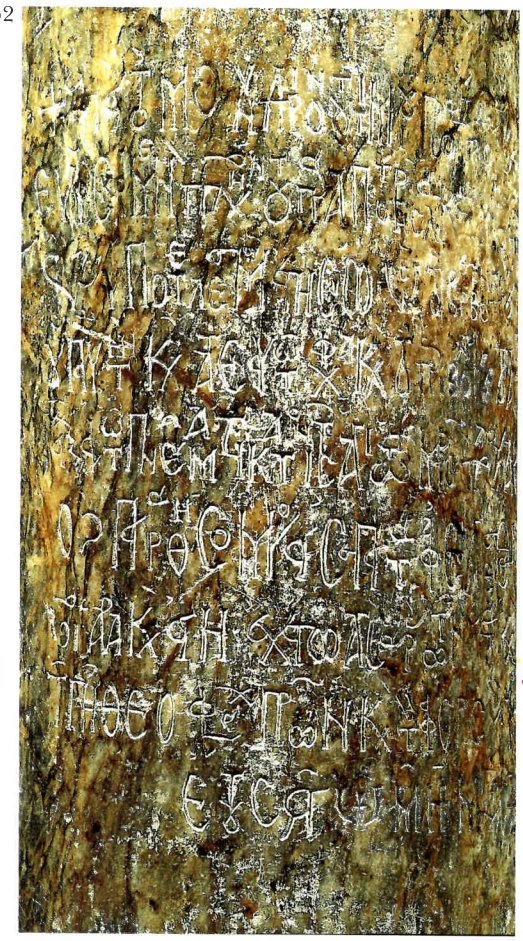
52. The land-register of the Metropolis of Mystras is carved on the columns of the church of Hagios Demetrios. First half of the 14th c. onwards.

53. The fountain in the west courtyard of the Metropolis is one of the final additions to the complex, before the headquarters of the see was transferred to Sparta.

51



52



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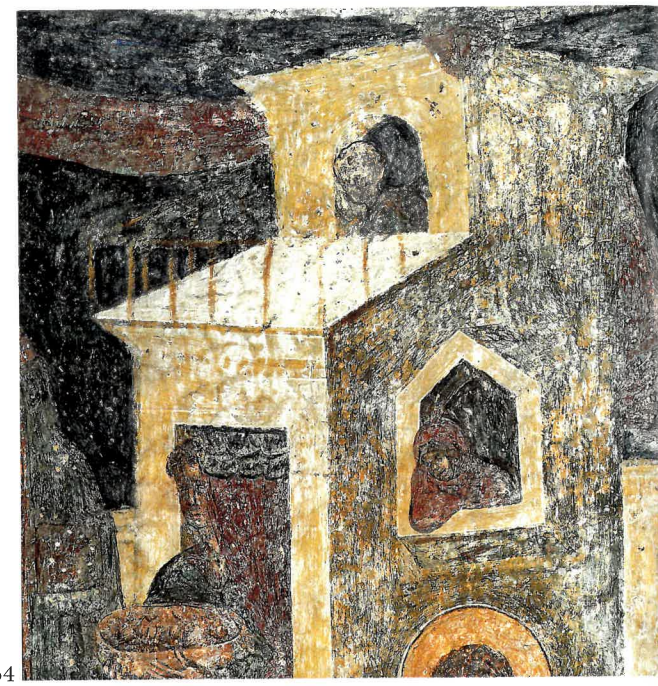


URBAN HOUSES

54. Detail from the depiction of the Birth of the Virgin. Third quarter of the 14th c. Mystras, Hagia Sophia.

55. Depiction of a single-storey house with a garden. Detached wall-painting. Late 14th-early 15th c. Berroia, Hagia Photida.

The main kernel of the town consisted of residential areas. Various types of Byzantine house evolved: houses with a large central room with an apse, around which other smaller rooms were set (Thessalonike); single-storey houses built around square courtyards (Gerasa, Athens, Pergamon); houses with a rectangular plan, with one to three rooms and possibly one or more upper storeys (Corinth, Arta); two- and three-storey complexes with a courtyard and a high enclosure wall (Syria); houses with an L-shaped plan, with one or two rooms, and with an upper storey on one or both legs of the L (Mouchli, Geraki); and single-room houses, or houses with an upper storey above a single room on the ground floor (Rentina).
A special position is occupied by the houses of Mystras, which are preserved in very good condition and are eloquent witnesses to the quality of life they offered.



54

55



56. Phrangopoulos house. Early 15th c. Mystras, Lower Town.



56

The houses of Mystras

The houses of Mystras had a ground floor and one, or more rarely two, upper storeys. The residential rooms were on the upper storey and the ancillary rooms on the ground floor. The basic kernel of the buildings at Mystras consisted of a single-roomed house with a ground floor and one upper storey. A variety of house forms was created by the addition of rooms, or entire residential units, or even towers, to this basic core. One of the most imposing houses in the town, the residence of the *protostrator* and *katholikos mesazon* of the despotate of the Morea, John Phrangopoulos, is built at the most steeply sloping point of the hillside and has a ground floor and an upper storey.

Functions of the house

The ground floor of Byzantine houses of Mystras was intended for ancillary services (stabling of animals, storage, cooking). The ground floor was built in such a way as to serve defensive requirements: the walls were made thick and solid and were often equipped with loopholes. The *mesopatos*, a low upper storey sometimes found above the ground floor, met a variety of needs. The *triclinium*, which took the form of a large unified room on the uppermost storey, was used for eating, sleeping and residential purposes. It has no permanent partition walls and was probably sometimes divided into individual sections with the aid of cheap structures. The triclinium often had balconies called *heliakoi*.

57. Triclinium of the Phrangopoulos house. Early 15th c. Mystras, Lower Town.

58. The hearth and storage cupboards were essential features of Byzantine houses. Triclinium of the Phrangopoulos house. Early 15th c. Mystras, Lower Town.

59. Laskaris house, large residence complex with numerous rooms and an external staircase (building phases of the 14th and 15th c.). Mystras, Lower Town.

57



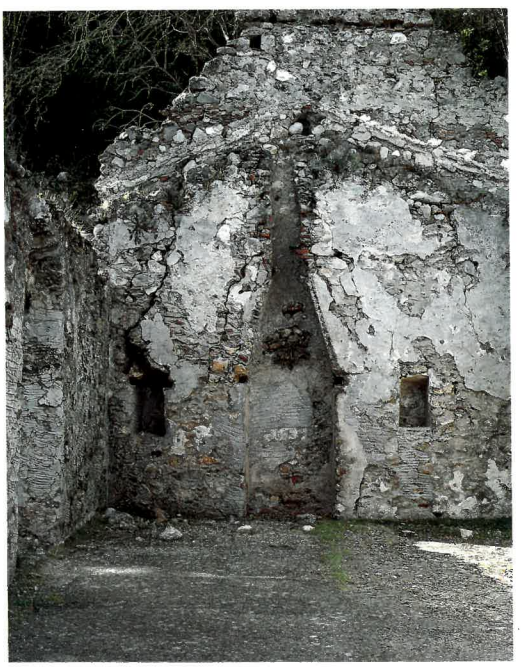
Triclinium

The triclinium was the most important room in any Byzantine house and was used for residential purposes, banqueting and occasionally for the preparation of food. It was called *chamo(ai)triklinos* when it was on the ground floor and *anogeon triklinarin* when it occupied the upper storey.

In the Byzantine houses of Mystras, the triclinium is a large undivided room, usually on the upper storey. It served the basic needs of the family and had a number of individual features that helped to improve the quality of life of the family members (hearth, cupboards, toilets). Smaller compartments were probably created with the aid of *falsomata* or *falsa* (reed-walls, timber partitions) that have not survived. The *heliakos* (balcony) was an extension of the triclinium on the façade with the best view.

The ground floor

In houses that occupied more than one level (Syria, Rentina, Mystras, Mouchli), the ground floor was given over to a variety of ancillary functions. Normally a small area, it was used for the preparation of food, to store goods, and as a stable for animals. In some cases (Syria, Rentina) it was occupied by workshops or a shop. In houses that had no upper storey (Thessalonike, Athens, Pergamon), all the needs of the family were served by rooms on the ground floor.



58

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bouras 1974, pp. 30-52. Marinou 1994, pp. 105-137. Moutsopoulos 1985, pp. 321-353. Orlandos 1937, pp. 53-114. Id. 1975, pp. 77-84. Sinos 1999, col. 483-501. Sodini 1984, pp. 341-397.

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60. Commercial street. Lower Town, Monemvasia.

61. Vault on the main street of the Lower Town, possibly used for commercial purposes. Now sealed off. Mystras.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

60



The commercial life of the large urban centres of Late Antiquity developed within the core of the urban design, in the public buildings of the agora. There were also shops in the porticoes along the sides of the main streets.
In Byzantine castle-towns the shops were located mainly along the sides of the main street or in private "courtyards", and were not clearly distinguished from workshops. Part of the retail trade was in the hands of itinerant merchants.
Lack of space, however, led to the shifting of the bulk of commercial activity outside the walls. Bazaars and great fairs held at regular intervals, normally in association with religious festivals, became an important institution in the economic life of the towns. Through these markets the local aristocracy channelled the agricultural produce to the domestic and foreign markets.

61



62



62. Hoard of Venetian coins [tornizeli], issued specially by the Venetians for use in the markets of the Eastern Mediterranean. 15th c. Messenia, Chatze.

63. Woman selling water. Detail from a depiction of a procession. Wall-painting. Late 13th c. Arta, Blacherna Monastery.

64. Merchant with weighing scales. Detail from a depiction of a procession. Wall-painting. Late 13th c. Arta, Blacherna Monastery.



63

Commerce at Mystras

The ground-floor vaults alongside the main street of the Lower Town probably housed part of the retail trade of the town. At the time of the Palaiologoi, Mystras was an important commercial centre for the surrounding area. The produce of the Lakonian soil –oil, honey, citrus fruit, wheat, and principally silk– was gathered at its markets, held outside the wall in the Outer Town, before being sold on the domestic market and in the West. Luxury items, textiles, weapons and paper required by the despots and the local aristocracy were met by imports, mainly from Venice and Florence, which transformed the town into an international trading post.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Asdracha 1982. Bouras 1974, pp. 43-44. Id. 1981, p. 648. Id. 1998. Crawford 1990, pp. 107-125. Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. III, pp. 270-283. Laïou 1980 A, pp. 237-243. Lambropoulou 1989. Svoronos 1979, pp. 338-341.

A.M.

64



CRAFTS AND INDUSTRIES

The secondary production sector, which had developed earlier and had been a mainstay of the urban economy, went into decline during the Palaiologan period (1261-1453). The economic reality of the time and the lack of technical expertise ushered in a period of recession for crafts and industries, and output came to a halt in many centres. As a result, luxury items (textiles, metal objects, weapons) had to be imported, mainly from Italy. The workshops that continued to function were often inside houses or located in residential zones. They cannot always be distinguished clearly from shops, since the craftsmen themselves often channelled their own products directly on to the market. Installations that polluted the environment, and were a danger to public health, or required large quantities of water, such as slaughter-houses, dyer's, and tanneries, were erected outside the town walls.

65. Tannery outside the main gate of the castle of Monemvasia, the port of the despotate of the Morea.

66. Olive-press in the Lower Town of Mystras.



65

An olive-press

The decline in crafts and industries in the large centres of the Byzantine empire is reflected at Mystras where, despite the increased output of silk in the 14th century, the raw material was not processed and turned into luxury cloths. There are some interesting indications



66

SOCIAL GATHERINGS

67. The lack of open spaces inside fortified towns made it difficult for crowds to assemble. The plateau in front of the palace was an ideal gathering place at Mystras.

The transition from the Early Christian to the Byzantine period was accompanied by a change in the nature of society, which became more closed and introverted. People now sought different occasions for social intercourse and engaged in other forms of entertainment, far removed from the market and the hippodrome.
Lack of space in the fortified settlements made it difficult for large crowds to assemble. Open space was available around the churches and other public buildings and on the main commercial streets. People's need for social contact was satisfied to some extent by religious occasions, processions and feasts. Forms of recreation popular in Late Antiquity, such as pantomime, gladiatorial combats and chariot racing in the hippodrome, were either banned or lost their appeal.
An important role in relaxation was now played by bath-houses, inns and taverns.



67

68. Large crowd. Detail from the Entry into Jerusalem. circa 1430. Mystras, Pantanassa.

69. Religious festivals were amongst the most important occasions for social gatherings in Late Byzantine towns. Depiction of a religious procession. Late 13th c. Arta, Blacherna Monastery.

The Palace plateau

In the fortified town of Mystras, the plateau in front of the palace complex, on which no buildings stood and which enjoyed a view over the plain, was suitable for gatherings of all kinds.
Indirect evidence that meetings of a philosophical character were held there is provided by the presence of intellectual figures such as George Gemistos Plethon, Bessarion, and the circle of scholars around them, who lived in the castle and developed their theories through rhetorical speeches and debates. These men of learning were associated with the aristocratic families of Constantinople (Palaiologoi, Laskaridai) which, when they came to the despotate, brought new ideas and tastes with them.
The large urban monasteries, the Metropolis, and the private chapels will also have played an important role in the social life of the inhabitants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Kiousopoulou 1993 A. Eadem 1997, pp. 63-64. Magoulias 1971, pp. 233-252. Mango 1981. Id. 1990, pp. 80-82, 83, 102-103. Medvedev 1993. Ploritis 1990. Sinos 1999, col. 414. Vryonis 1981.

A.M.

68



69



WORSHIP IN THE TOWN

MONASTERIES

... to found a holy monastery ... as a place to live ...

Typikon of Areia Monastery

The first Christian monasteries were built in the countryside. The view was generally held that monks did not belong amidst the temptations and hurly burly of the towns. They were forbidden to enter towns by a law passed by the emperor Theodosios I. Monasteries began to be founded within the urban tissue in the 6th century. It was now felt that an experienced ascetic could perform some kind of role in the town.

The monastery complexes shared a number of common organisational features. At the centre stood the monastery church, the katholikon. The other buildings, arranged around it in contact with the fortified enclosure wall, catered for the daily needs of the monks (cells, refectory, hearth, bathroom, storerooms, hospital) and also housed a number of activities designed to secure the basic requirements for life in the monastery (olive-press, mill, bakery).



70



71

70. Detail from a depiction of concelebrating hierarchs. Third quarter of the 14th c. Mystras, Peribleptos.

71. The Pantanassa convent. Mystras.

72. The monogram of the first despot of Mystras, Manuel Kantakouzenos, adorns the impost blocks of the pilasters in Hagia Sophia. Mystras.

73. View of Hagia Sophia. 1349-1365. Mystras.



72

Hagia Sophia

Monasticism occupied a special place in Byzantine society. Enjoying the favour of the emperor and the aristocracy and the respect and love of ordinary citizens, monasteries developed into centres of intellectual life that possessed considerable economic power.

The building and renovation of monasteries by members of the aristocracy became widespread. In Mystras, the capital of the despotate of the Morea, Manuel Kantakouzenos, the first despot and son of the Byzantine emperor, founded the church of Christ Zoodotes, later to became the katholikon of the Monastery of the same name, with which Hagia Sophia has been identified.

The favour evinced by the upper class towards monasticism also found expression in privileges and donations. A chrysobull of Andronikos II increased the landed property of the Brondocheion Monastery at Mystras.

The Pantanassa

The Pantanassa Monastery is the only one at Mystras that is still active. In about the middle of the 19th century it was converted into a convent.

Life in a coenobium was based on non-ownership of property, obligatory work, and obedience to one's superiors.

At its foundation, every monastery received its Typikon, a collection of rules regulating the way it functioned and the organisation of the daily life of the monks.

The head of the monastery or convent was the abbot or abbess, who was assisted by the abbot's council. Every monk was assigned specific responsibilities and tasks. The *oikonomos*, for example, was responsible for the management of the monastery's property, while other monks devoted their time to the copying of manuscripts, painting and/or outdoor agricultural work.

The influence of western models is evident in the church of the Pantanassa. Gothic elements can be seen in the central zone of the east façade of the monument and on the tall campanile. The influence of western architecture is also apparent in other major buildings in the capital of the despotate.

73



74



Ancillary areas

The number and variety of ancillary areas in a monastery depended on its size and wealth. One basic facility was the refectory, in which the monks dined. It was a spacious building of rectangular plan with a semicircular apse at the east end, where the abbot sat. The refectory was decorated with wall-paintings.

The kitchen or hearth, where the food was prepared, communicated with the refectory. This was normally a square building with the hearth at the centre. The vaulted ceiling of the kitchen was specially designed to serve as a large chimney.

The cells in which the monks slept were an essential feature of the monastery.

Of the ancillary areas of the Brondocheion Monastery, all that can be identified today are the refectory, the kitchen and certain cells.

Brondocheion Monastery

The wealthiest and most powerful monastic institution at Mystras was the Brondocheion Monastery. The church of the Hagioi Theodoroi, the first katholikon of this monastery, was built in the late 13th century by the monks Daniel and Pachomios. A new katholikon was built at the beginning of the 14th century dedicated to the Virgin Hodegetria and known as the Aphendiko.

Pachomios's close relations with Constantinople secured important privileges and extensive estates for the monastery. Brondocheion was subject directly to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The abbot Pachomios received the honorary title *Great Protosynkellos of the Peloponnese*, which was bestowed upon high-ranking prelates at the Patriarchate and metropolitan bishops.

Brondocheion Monastery played an important role in the intellectual life of the despotate. It probably had a scriptorium in which manuscripts were copied, a very common activity amongst monastic and ecclesiastical circles in general, who formed one of the few social groups that possessed the necessary level of education.

75



74. Monasteries often had scriptoria in which books were copied. Depiction of an elaborate lectern from the scene of the Last Judgement. Early 14th c. Mystras, Hagios Demetrios.

75. Church of the Hodegetria, the katholikon of the Brondocheion Monastery. circa 1310. Mystras.

76. The refectory of the Brondocheion monastery, one of the best preserved monastic ancillary buildings in the settlement of Mystras.

77. The Peribleptos Monastery. Third quarter of the 14th c. Mystras.



76

The Peribleptos

In the Byzantine empire, it was common practice for members of aristocratic families to found or renovate monasteries. Anyone who erected or repaired an ecclesiastical foundation was recognised as its founder. According to the "founder's law", the rights of founder were held for life, and could be inherited or granted as a privilege.
Founders enjoyed specific rights and could intervene in the administration of the monastic foundation, but at the same time they were bound by certain responsibilities. They were obliged to attend to the maintenance and embellishment of the buildings and to make sure that the necessary supplies were available.
Portraits of the couple that founded the monastery are preserved in a wall-painting in the Peribleptos.



77

78. Chapel of Hagios Georgios, Mystras, Lower Town.

79. Chapel of Hagios Christophoros. Mystras, Lower Town.

CHURCHES

In the first centuries after the official recognition of Christianity (4th-7th century), the need for the faithful to participate in the divine liturgy was satisfied by the large Christian basilicas, which were often built in the centre of the town.
The transition to the medieval world proper was accompanied by the building of small churches and monastery katholika that were incorporated within the urban tissue. Towns were fragmented into several cores of activity, or neighbourhoods, which were organised around the churches. Some urban centres acquired particular prestige from large shrines of pilgrimage, such as the church of Hagios Demetrios in Thessalonike, and those of the Panagia, the Theologos, and the Hepta Paidon (Seven Boys) at Ephesus.



79

78



The chapels of Mystras

At Mystras, in addition to the numerous monasteries and large churches that played an important role in the urban design of the settlement, there was a large number of smaller churches. Some of these were probably "private" buildings. The erection of churches was a very common practice in the ranks of the Byzantine ruling class and was an effective means of self-promotion. The founders and their families were to be buried inside these churches, which sometimes have a funerary character. The wall-paintings decorating them often include portraits of the members of the founding family.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Bouras 1994, vol. II. Chatzidakis 1993. Kazhdan 1991 A, p. 1160. Louvi 1980. Morris 1995. Oikonomides 1979, pp. 174-179. Orlandos 1958. Sinos 1999, col. 416-472, 501-517.

L.N. - Y.K. - P.P.

BURIALS WITHIN THE WALLS

80. Funeral portrait of the Byzantine notable Manuel Laskaris the Chatzikes. 1445. Mystras, Pantanassa.

81. The Dormition. Wall-painting. Third quarter of the 14th c. Mystras, Peribleptos.

The practice of burying the dead outside the towns, inherited from antiquity, continued in the early centuries of Christianity, the period at which the famous catacombs outside the walls of Rome were used. The first tombs inside the towns made their appearance in the 6th century AD, though the construction of them was not officially recognised until the time of Leo VI the Wise (late 9th-early 10th century AD). Christians created groups of graves, forming cemeteries, mostly around the churches. In the Late Byzantine period it became a common practice for laity to be interred inside churches, in chapels and in their porticoes.

80



81



82. Cist-graves, probably of monks, outside the entrance to the church of the Hagioi Theodoroi. Mystras, Brondocheion Monastery.

83. Wool twill from the burial of a noble. Mystras, Hagia Sophia.

84. Silk tabby from the burial of a noble. Mystras, Hagia Sophia.

85. Excavations in the floor of the stoas of the palace church revealed burials associated with the aristocracy of the town. Mystras, Hagia Sophia.



82

Funeral chapels

The Byzantine churches of Mystras have small chapels connected with them. The majority of these, set at the four corners of the church, are funeral chapels. Inside them were buried members of the Despots' families, donors, and imperial and ecclesiastical officials. Portraits and inscriptions in wall-paintings above the tombs provide evidence for the aristocracy of Mystras.

Hagioi Theodoroi

A large number of underground burials has been discovered in the area around the church of the Hagioi Theodoroi, inside the grounds of the Brondocheion Monastery. Cheap simple brooches found in some of them indicate that they must have been burials of monks. The chapels of this church were funeral chapels, reflecting a fairly wide practice in Byzantium. In them were buried wealthy donors and imperial and ecclesiastical officials.

Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia, the palace church, was also a cemetery church. Excavations during the 1950s in the floors of the north and west porticoes of the building uncovered continuous rows of tombs containing multiple burials. The personal items buried with the dead demonstrate that they were members of the aristocracy of the despotate. Burials have also been located inside one of the chapels. These must be connected with outstanding figures of the town.

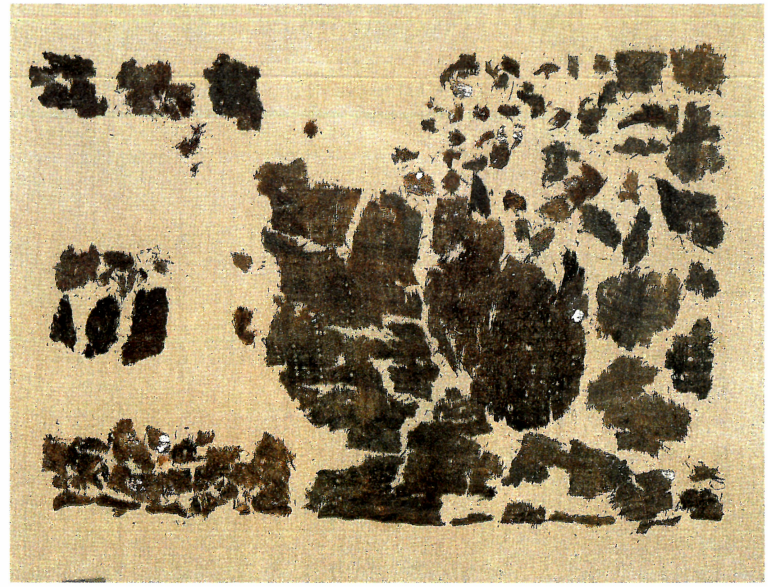
BIBLIOGRAPHY: Chatzidakis 1993. Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. IV, pp. 185-188. Laos et al. 1991, pp. 396-399.

L.N. - P.P. - P.K.

83



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POST-BYZANTINE MYSTRAS

The green of the wall-painting was very fine, and the brick-red complementing the green...

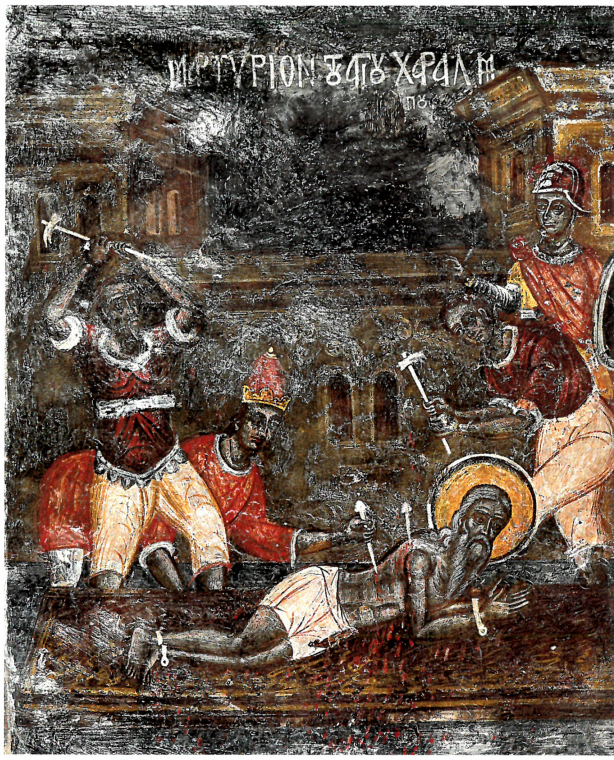
Yiannis Ritsos

After its surrender to the Turks in 1460, by the last despot Demetrios Palaiologos, Mystras continued to be one of the main urban centres of the area and became the seat of a Turkish sanjak (administrative area).
According to the testimony of a 17th century traveller, the Greek population continued to live inside the castle. Moslem, Jewish and Greek neighbourhoods grew up outside the walls. The inhabitants were engaged in the rearing of silkworms and the cultivation of olives, vines, citrus fruit, figs and tobacco. Much of the local produce was exported to Western Europe.
The continuity of life at Mystras in the Turkish period is reflected in the built environment of the castle. The town walls, like the older houses, were repaired or extended. New houses were built, in the "Palace quarter" for example, and outside the walls in the "Bedmakers' quarter" near the Peribleptos. New public buildings were added to the old to meet the needs of the capital of a sanjak.
The castle-town began to go into decline in 1770, when it was devastated by Albanians during an attempt to suppress a major rebellion (the Orloff episode). Although the abandonment of the settlement intensified with the foundation of Sparta (1834), it continued to be occupied until the middle of the 20th century. A royal decree of 1921, based on a proposal originating from the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education proclaimed the "Necropolis" of Mystras, with its 8 churches and 9 chapels, to be an outstanding Byzantine monument. The last inhabitants left in 1953, when the site was expropriated by the state. Mystras is today included in the Worldwide Heritage List approved by an intergovernmental UNESCO committee in 1989.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Celebi 1994, pp. 80-82, 265-268. Chatzidakis 1993, pp. 20-25. Runciman 1986, pp. 95-112. Sinos 1999, col. 397-404, 415-416, 442-445.

Y.K. - L.N.

86





87

88



86. The martyrdom of St Charalambos. 17th c.-18th c. Mystras, Pantanassa.

87. Maidservant from the depiction of the Birth of the Virgin. 17th c.-18th c. Mystras, Pantanassa.

88. Engraving from a book by Coronelli. 1697. Gennadeios Library. American School of Classical Studies.

89. Byzantine house with several repairs dating from the Turkish period. Mystras, Lower Town.

90. The church of Hagios Nikolaos. 17th-18th c. Mystras, Upper Town.

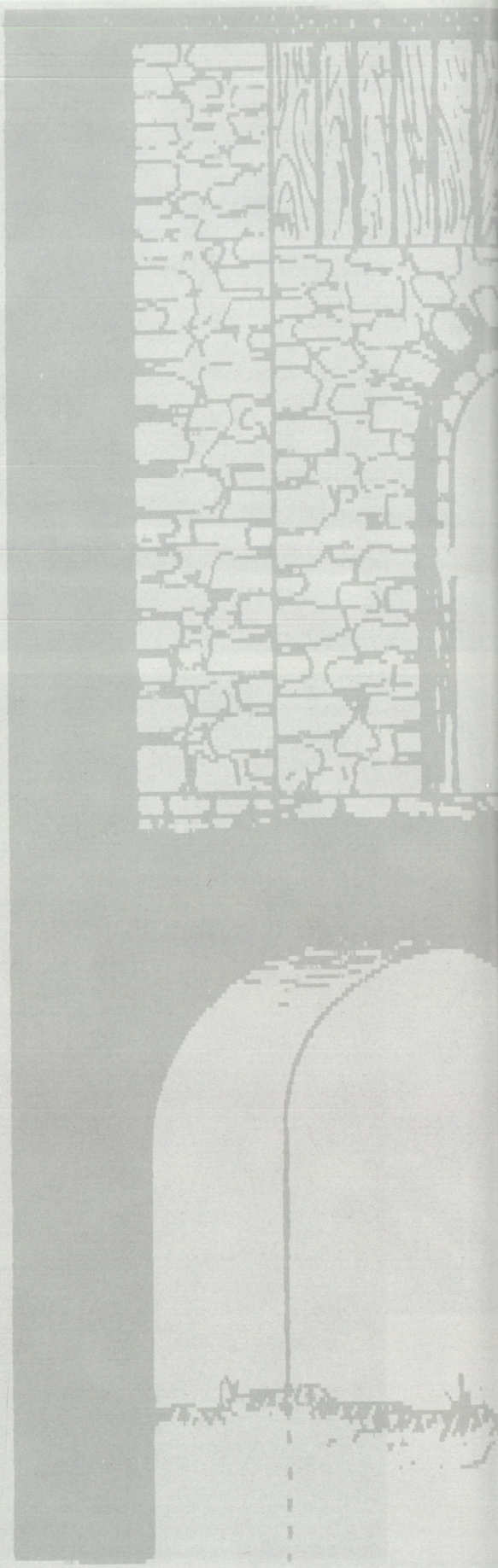


89

90



Inside the houses of Mystras: an attempted reconstruction



By its very nature, an archaeological site enjoys the privilege of engaging visitors' emotions directly and naturally (Pearce 1990, pp. 143-180), especially when it is in a good state of preservation, like the Late Byzantine castle-town of Mystras. A tour of authentic buildings and areas brings all the senses into play and contact with the past, through remainspreserved in situ, is an intense experience that leaves visitors with a precious taste of the "authentic".

With the aim of exploiting this dimension of archaeological sites, the whole of Mystras has been treated as an exhibit. At the same time, reconstructions have been carried out of some of the internal rooms, such as the palace kitchen and the ground-floor of a private house, and these could gradually be extended to other selected rooms.

The reconstruction of a room is fascinating for most visitors, since it facilitates the process of travelling back mentally in time, through details and minor elements of everyday life that visitors can compare with their own experience: objects, set in their natural context, serve as a substitute for the human presence, operate by reference, and help to decipher the past (Shanks – Tilley 1987, pp. 68-99).

Before any intervention of this kind is attempted, consideration has to be given to the ethical and practical problems to be faced at the design stage for the reconstruction. Some of the problems involved may be mentioned here by way of example. How far are we creating the delusion of authenticity in cases where the archaeological and excavation data do not constitute a well-attested sealed group, and are therefore not capable of supporting the exact reconstruction of a specific unit in time and space?

How can we distinguish between certainty, probability and hypothesis? Are we combining authentic objects, exact copies and free reconstructions? Are we confusing the emotional with the informative-educational aspect of the exhibition –and if so, to what extent? How can we reconcile the immediacy of the experience with the need to protect the objects and the site?
In the case of Mystras, the solutions chosen were governed by an awareness of these concerns and, at the same time, by the particular features of the site: the objects used in the reconstructions are copies of finds discovered at Mystras, though not necessarily found in the particular room or area in which the reconstruction is made. Reconstructions of furniture are based on iconographic material from the site. Recourse was had to literary sources for those features that have left no materials remains. The two levels of approach, the informative and the emotional, are available to visitors but are not confused, since they are to be found in communicating, yet distinct, rooms. The absence of ancient artefacts makes it easier for visitors to move freely about the site.
The final proposal was not the "faithful reconstruction" of a reality that we are never in a position to know –that is, the kitchen of the palace at Mystras in the 15th century. Instead of this scientifically unattainable "revival" of the past, we proposed a convincing reconstruction of the interior of the kitchen of a Byzantine archontiko, an experiential and narrative approach that aspires to create an emotional experience for visitors, and give them a small taste, both literally and metaphorically, of Byzantine diet.

E.V.

BYZANTINE HOUSES

And as soon as the sun sinks in the west, the wise man should be in his house, having secured the doors with bolts.

Eustathios of Thessalonike (12th c.)

The need for somewhere to live, which is as old humankind and, like the need to secure food, inextricably linked with survival, follows a history parallel with that of human beings. In the early stages of human development the place to live was associated with protection from adverse weather and the need for security in the face of external dangers of all kinds. As humans evolved and developed a more advanced way of thinking, and consequently of behaving, houses "dressed themselves" in the new aspirations and were called upon to meet more complex needs than that of a home. They ceased to be simply "constructions" and were transformed into structures of diverse functions and significance: areas that served the biological and aesthetic needs of their owners. A space in which people linked by ties of blood but of different sexes, ages and needs could carry out their activities. A space offering security and suitable for relaxation, the development of family and social relations, and work.

The structural features, then, were determined by the common needs and the choices shared by an extended group at a particular moment in history. The lay-out of the houses, however, was also undoubtedly influenced by the geology and climate of the area and period, so that similar –if not identical– needs were served by houses of different form. All this explains the diversity of form in Byzantine houses. The eleven centuries of life and the ecumenical character of the Byzantine empire, which embraced not only a variety of nationalities with differing roots and traditions, but also a large number of lands, different climates, building materials and traditional techniques, fully account for the "mosaic" of Byzantine houses.

Investigation of the functionality of Byzantine houses –that is, the way in which the various needs were served in them– is obviously of greater interest than a dry ypological classification and presentation.

The arrangement of rooms and functions was influenced to a large extent by the number of storeys in the house. In the Byzantine empire, in addition to the single-storey house, the (o)spitin chamogeon or chamaigeon *(Miklosich-Müller 1860-1890, III, 20, 50), there were also houses with one or two upper storeys, called* dipata or tripata *(Miklosich-Müller 1860-1890, III, 52 and VI, 41). Indeed, houses with three or four upper storeys are also known (John Chrysostome, 4th c. / PG, 58, 522), though in this case we are dealing with an exception.*

In single-storey houses, the various functions were carried out in rooms normally arranged around a courtyard, which may or may not have a peristyle (Sodini 1984, pp. 341-396). In houses built at more than one level, life was organised dif-

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91. Triclinium in the Laskaris house. Mystras, Lower Town.

92. Two-storey house built at right angles to the hillside. Mystras, Lower Town.

ferently. The ground-floor area was given over to animals, and was frequently also used for storage (Orlandos 1937, pp. 55-60, Moutsopoulos 1985, pp. 321-353, Sinos 1999, col. 483), or as a shop-workshop (Scranton 1957, pp. 128-131). The family lived and worked mostly on the upper storey, which contained the triclinium *or* anogeon triklinarin *(Miklosich-Möller 1860-1890, III, 52), a large, undivided room. This was used by the family as living, dining and relaxation space and also as a reception room. One important feature of the triclinium was the* heliakos *(Miklosich-Möller 1860-1890, III, 56), a kind of balcony which, in the houses at Mystras, was set on the side facing the best view, and was suited to the Mediterranean climate of the region (Orlandos 1937, pp. 73-76). The windows that opened on to the street*

92



93-96. The Byzantines had a wide variety of house-hold equipment, as is clear from depictions of furniture of the period. Details from Byzantine representations in wall-paintings at Mystras.

93





94

admitted light and facilitated communication with the outside world. Ptochoprodromos calls upon Byzantine ladies to examine his wares through them:

... as I travelled and wandered the streets I shouted out:
'Ladies, palm-readers, my good mistresses of the house,
come out and buy my curtain fabrics...
Verses of Theodore Ptochoprodromos to king lord Manuel Komnenos
(Eideneier 1991, p. 128, vv. 189-191)

Individual compartments within the triclinium were probably created by the use of falsomata or falsa, *which were wooden partitions or reed-walls (Orlandos 1937, p. 64). Smaller rooms were often added to the main kernel of the triclinium, as at Mystras (Sinos 1999, col. 484-495). These were called* kouvouklia *and were used either as living quarters for women or as bedrooms; in either case, they provided private living space. (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. IV, pp. 294-296). Ptochoprodromos, in describing a family incident, refers to his wife:*

She did not listen to what I had to say,
.....
but gathered up her children and her distaff,
went into her kouvoukli, shut the door tight
and shut herself up in there, hiding, leaving me outside.

On another occasion, he says of himself:

I left and ran at once to the kouvoukli
and fell on my bed, waiting for dinner
Prodromos lord Theodoros to the king Mauroioannes
(Eideneier 1991, pp. 102, 105, vv. 123-127, 200-201)

Byzantine houses were designed so as to provide practical solutions for other problems than living space and to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants. Water, an important element in the Byzantine household, was often collected in cisterns set in the basements of houses, to which it was channelled by a system of pipes starting from the roof (Orlandos 1937, pp. 56-57, Moutsopoulos 1985, pp. 331-337, Sinos 1999, col. 494). An indication of the high living standards for the period is given by the installation of toilets, as on the upper storey of some of the houses at Mystras (Sinos 1999, col. 488-489). Special regulations regarding the drainage system were designed to secure public health and at the same



95

time protected the rights of citizens (Karpozilos 1989, pp. 335-352). More specifically, it was forbidden by law –according to Constantine Armenopoulos– in the 14th century for drainage pipes to run from houses into a square or market place or stoa or alley, or to put it simply, into any public street in a town or village, because of the harm this caused to passers-by *(Karpozilos 1989, p. 342).*

Storage needs were met by a variety of structural solutions. Pithos-shaped pits dug in the ground-floors of houses (Bouras 1974, pp. 30-52, Travlos 1993, p. 154) and specially created blind rooms (Moschos – Moschou 1991, pp. 3-29) were useful for storing the harvest. Various items were kept in armaria, *which were special recesses in the walls that could sometimes be closed, as is clear from a verse of*



96

Ptochoprodromos: I secretly took the key and opened the armarin (*Prodromos lord Theodoros to the king Mauroioannes:* Eideneier 1991, p. 105, v. 216)
or from:
I could open my armarin, and find it full
of bread, abundant wine and cooked tunny-fish,
slices of bonito, and mackerel, dried and fresh,
but when I open it now I can see the empty floors,
and paper bags full of papers.
Verses of Theodore Ptochoprodromos to king lord Manuel Komnenos
(Eideneier 1991, p. 121, vv. 92-96)

A major contribution to the improvement of everyday living conditions within the house was played by furniture. The great variety of Byzantine furniture is apparent both from the literary sources and from artistic representations: couches, beds, mattresses, tables, stools, chests, carpets, lamps, handbasins, bowls, dishes, ladles, frying pans, and sauce-boats *(Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. II. 2, pp. 60-116, Oikonomides 1990, pp. 205-214). The rich spectrum of household equipment was in keeping with the variety of house forms and also designed to suit different Byzantine purses. The* esteemed *and* noble *wife of Ptochoprodromos, for example, comments:*
I was of good family and you were a poor citizen
.....
you slept on your mat and I in a bed
I had a large dowry
I had silver and gold, and you had kneading tubs

98



97



97. Dinner scene. Detail from a manuscript of the Book of Job (Par. Gr. 135, fol. 9v). 1362. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

98. Depiction of a couch. Detail of a wall-painting. Late 14th-early 15th c. Beroia. Hagia Photida.

99. Armario (cupboard) in a house. Mystras.



99



and troughs for making dough, and a large fire-stand.
Prodromos lord Theodoros to the king Mauroioannes
(Eideneier 1991, p. 101, vv. 69-74)

These domestic goods, though seemly, pale into insignificance before that described in the novels of the knights and which was probably to be found in the palaces:
A glorious bed, precious, gold with pears and with a mattress all of gold
The table luxurious, the tableware of gold with much outstanding art.
Kallimachos and Chrysorroe (14th c.)
(Kriaras 1955, pp. 36-39, vv. 362-363, 371-372)

Social differences were also reflected in the interior decoration of houses, and in the number of households that occupied a single building. Houses belonging to the wealthier inhabitants were distinguished from the rest both by their size and by their luxury decoration of wall-paintings, tapestries and mosaic floors (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. IV, pp. 296-307, PG 31, 288, PG 55, 510). Specialist craftsmen:

decorated and adorned with wall-paintings
houses and palaces of great kings
and other imposing houses of great and wealthy men.
Tale of the Four-Footed Beasts
(Tsiouni 1971, vv. 399-401)

Finally, two or more families often shared a house, as is evident from a verses of Ptochoprodromos:

I have a neighbour who is a siever, and only a falsoma separates us
.....
.....
and I can see his fire dancing in the hearth.
Verses of Theodore Ptochoprodromos to king lord Manuel Komnenos
(Eideneier 1991, p. 129, vv. 198-201)

L. N.

THE BYZANTINE TABLE

The diet of a population group is a highly important subject, study of which yields information relating to the local climate and terrain, the products of farming and stock-breeding, the relations between town and countryside, commercial exchanges, and social stratification. In diet are imprinted symbolic beliefs, religious injunctions, and more general cultural attitudes, which can be so deeply entrenched in diet customs and practice as to be difficult to interpret semiologically. The Byzantine table, for example, reflects the habits of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and incorporates the Judaeo-Christian traditions and a variety of dietary elements drawn from the peoples who were from time to time included within the borders of the empire; at the same time, it attests to the deep roots of the so-called "Mediterranean diet".

At the base of the diet pyramid was the "daily bread" mentioned in Sunday prayers: bread, baked in the home or bought from a nearby baker's shop, was the main form of sustenance of the Byzantines. Pure bread was reserved for the rich, while the rest had to make do with semi-pure bread, called the bread of poverty *(Ptochoprodromos, 12th c.).* For dirty bread is fit for the poor, but only the purest for the rich *(Artemidoros, 2nd c.). The granary of the empire was at first Egypt, and later Thrace. The state concerned itself with the supply of bread, the* annona, *and from the 11th century onwards, Michael VII made it a state monopoly (Stambogli 1997, p. 22).*

*Olives of various kinds, pulses (*split peas, lentils, chick-peas, chick-peas and beans*), root plants, and cabbage supplemented the table of the poor, along with* bird's eggs, of which the houses of the poor are always full *(Ptochoprodromos). Almost every family also had a garden near the house (the* livadion tou oikou *or the* enthyria peribolia*) or further afield (the* esothyra *or* exothyra*, depending on whether it was located in the centre of the settlement or on the fringes) (Koder 1995, p. 50). In this they grew, for their own consumption, cabbages, lettuces, onions, radishes, carrots, leeks, spinach, celery and also mint, rosemary, oregano and dill. The exiled Michael Choniates writes from the poor island of Kea:* We eat cabbage all the time! *(Kođer 1992, p. 22). Different varieties of fruit prospered in different areas: figs, grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates, plums, melons and also* dorakia *(peaches) or* armeniaka *(apricots). Like modern Greeks, the Byzantines often ate dry figs stuffed with chestnuts to assuage their hunger (Kalleris 1953, pp. 704-709). With their meal, the poor drank cheap wines, such as* kivarion oinon *or* absinthion *(Id., pp. 713-714 and notes 6 and 7).*

Dietary customs were modified somewhat, however, according to climate and geography.

Islanders and those who dwelt by the coasts enjoyed fresh fish and seafood: they caught mackerel and tuna as well as octopus, squid, cuttlefish, mussels and crabs

100



101



102



100-104. A variety of vessels use by the Byzantines for storage, and the preparation and serving of food.

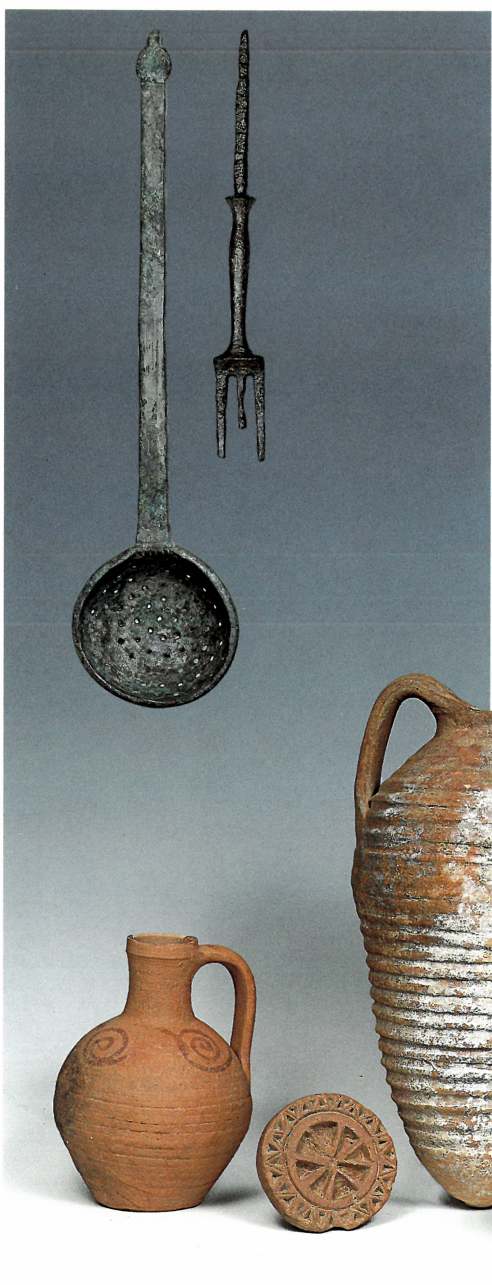
105. The palace kitchen in the Kantakouzenos wing. Mystras, Upper Town.

103



(Ptochoprodromos). Those who did not live by the sea had to make do with salted fish, which could be transported and preserved through the winter. Inland it was easier to find meat and dairy produce. Goats and suckling lambs were boiled, roasted or cooked on the spit and accompanied by vegetables. Pork was usually salted, as the Pig himself tells us in the Tale of the Four-Footed Beasts: *They salt me and preserve me the whole year round and put me in a cooking pot and in the storage jar. Various types of cheese catered for all tastes:* anthotyro, myzithra, *(types of cream cheese) Cretan cheese, the famous Vlach cheese* (vlachikon tyritsin), *and* cheap white cheese *cheese for the very poor.*

104



105





The Byzantines did not confine themselves to local produce: many foodstuffs were traded from one area to another, and the countryside supplied the urban centres, in a period when it has been calculated that there were nine inhabitants in the countryside for every town-dweller (Durliat 1995, p. 23). There were special laws permitting crops to be grown near Constantinople in order to ensure a supply of fresh produce on the markets of the capital (Koder 1992, p. 11). There were also organised guilds in the food trade, such as bakers, butchers, pig-sellers, fish-merchants *and* saldamarioi. Plakountades *or* plakountrioi, *made a variety of sweets, such as cakes, honey-cakes and fritters, or pancakes with honey. Quality, price and availability were secured by a system of market inspection.*

Diet and the quality of life in general depended directly on the social and economic status of the various groups in the population. The plain diet of ordinary people contrasted with the luxury and refinement characteristic of the upper-class table, which aimed at unusual taste experiences, trying everything that was nurtured by the earth, the depths of the sea, and the immeasurable expanse of the air and whatever flies, crawls or swims *(Gregory of Nyssa, 4th c.). A choice table of this nature is also described by Ptochoprodromos:*

first the roast is brought out, a roast bird,
and second the sauce, rich and full,
and third sweet-and-sour sauce cooked with saffron
with wheat, flaked chestnuts
mushrooms, vinegar and unsmoked honey,
and next is a large, red nightingale
and a huge grey mullet from Rhegis
and a sea-bream of the best quality.

More tales by Hilarion the monk, Ptochoprodromos to his excellency the king lord Manuel Porphyrogennetos Komnenos (Eideneier 1991, p. 148, vv. 172-179)



106

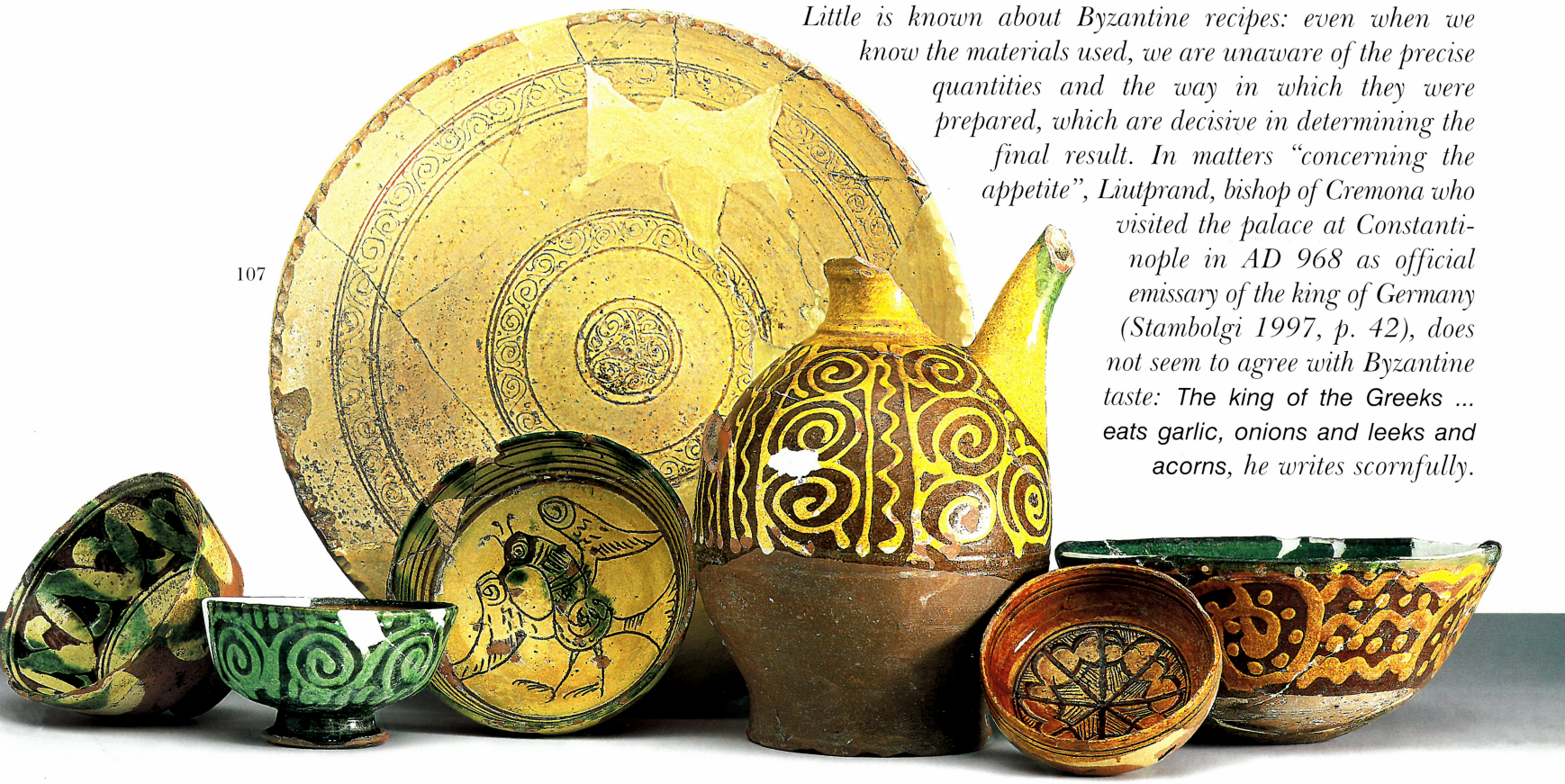
106. There would have been only limited artificial lighting in the houses of Late Byzantine Mystras: candlesticks, lamps and other ancillary implements, such as tweezers to extinguish candles, have been found in the castle.

107. Luxurious Byzantine tableware.

Byzantine notables were fond of sophisticated tastes. Partridges, turtle-doves, thrushes and quail were favourite game. The peacock boasts: Kings eat me for their lunch and rulers and nobles for breakfast and dinner *(Poulologos, 14th c.). Hare was cooked in wine (Ptochoprodromos) and venison was served with sauce and caviar (Liutprand, 10th c.). Rare fish and caviar from the Black Sea were considered to be the choicest titbits by gourmets:* the hosts of fishes, *fishes arouse Ptochoprodromos's envy, and Apokaukos describes* a technique used by cooks for fish, which they cover with flour and fry in a pan. *Trade with the Orient and India supplied the palace with exotic spices (cinnamon, nutmeg and mustard). Since a fully rounded experience for the palate should arouse all the senses, cooks were attentive to detail, serving their food with coloured sauces that would attract the eye (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. V, pp. 40-44). No good meal was complete without sweet Thracian (from Mount Ganos), Cretan or Samian wine or Chian wine served copiously (Ptochoprodromos). Wines from Cyprus or Monemvasia were famous. The Byzantines drank a kind of sweet wine prepared by adding honey and spices, particularly pepper (*konditon*). At the end of a meal given by the emperor, nuts and fruit were served on gold platters.*

Little is known about Byzantine recipes: even when we know the materials used, we are unaware of the precise quantities and the way in which they were prepared, which are decisive in determining the final result. In matters "concerning the appetite", Liutprand, bishop of Cremona who visited the palace at Constantinople in AD 968 as official emissary of the king of Germany (Stambolgi 1997, p. 42), does not seem to agree with Byzantine taste: The king of the Greeks ... eats garlic, onions and leeks and acorns, *he writes scornfully.*

107



He describes as "nauseating" the famous soup called garon, *an ancient Greek dish that was passed on to the Romans and from them to Byzantium, which was made from the entrails of fish, salted and then cooked with oil, wine, oregano and a few small fish (Kalleris 1953, pp. 695-696, notes 6 and 7). The bishop also regarded the wine served as unfit to drink, since it contained tar, resin and plaster!*
Similarly, Ptochoprodromos mocks the monasteries for their "orgies of gluttony":

for we do not eat fish, my king,
except for bread, lobster, and real crabs.
and roast scampi, fried chestnuts,
and cabbage and split peas, followed by oysters and mussels,
also, my lord, other fishes,
and split peas and rice with honey,
black-eyed beans, olives and caviar,
and autumn fish-roe for lack of appetite,
and apples and dates and chestnuts
and Chian currants from citrus.
More tales by Hilarion the monk, Ptochoprodromos to his excellency the king lord Manuel Porphyrogennetos Komnenos
(Eideneier 1991, pp. 156-157, vv. 318-328)

This description is apparently inconsistent with the regulations and traditions of monastic life, for which vegetables and bread were the basis of the diet. The monks assuaged their hunger with agiozoumi, *a soup made of water with onions and a few drops of oil and sprigs of savoury, into which they put bread. Hermits contented themselves with eating* whatever vegetables grew untended from the earth, *without oil or salt, or* soaked broad beans *and* bitter beans *(Ptochoprodromos).*
Fasting was not confined to the clergy, but extended to all the faithful and those of Christ's part. *The pious Byzantines fasted strictly, in accordance with the dictates of the church:* eat only bread with salt and cabbage / and likewise drink only water... *(Koder 1992, p. 13). As today, Wednesdays and Fridays were days of abstention (Ptochoprodromos).* For on Wednesday the Saviour was delivered to Pilate and on Friday he was crucified.
It is notable that the dietary habits imposed by the Church and by tradition were directly connected with the productive cycle. The prohibition of meat during Lent, for example, was in spring, the season when animals were putting on weight through eating the abundant pasturage they found in the meadows and fields. Similarly, the Easter lamb is connected with the need to reduce the flocks of sheep and goats before the summer, when rainfall is limited and grazing becomes scarce.
Quite apart from the injunctions of the Church, eating habits were invested with various symbolical beliefs. Medical prescriptions recommending certain foods for their therapeutic properties occupy the borders between superstition and science.

108



108. Dinner scene. Manuscript of the Book of Job (Par. Gr. 135, fol. 9v). 1362. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Paul of Aegina advises: split peas, when roasted twice are good for the stomach. *(Koder 1992, p. 39). The oneirocritic texts provide a good illustration of this symbolic aspect of food, the roots of which are lost in the depths of time: sweets meant sorrow:* sweet food foretells bitterness. *Apples were the* apple of strife. *Eggs had various interpretations:* to hold eggs means grief, but if a man eats partridge eggs, he will find wealth from a beautiful woman. *(Micha-Lambaki 1988). However, the sphere that most strongly reflects the connection between diet and its general cultural context is that relating to restrictions and prohibitions. We may cite, for example, the severe penalties imposed on those who ate* aimatias *(blood-meat), which reflect the awe in which blood, a sacred symbol, was held (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. V, p. 58). Interesting evidence on culture and the social articulation of the population is provided by the ritual followed at meals, which was very strict in the case of the upper class (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. V, pp. 136ff.). A proper diet involved four meals a day:* prophagon, ariston, deilinon and deipnon. *On formal occasions women were not allowed to eat with the men. In a 12th century novel, the modest Rodanthe explains:* I did not enter out of a sense of modesty / for I am a woman and a maid / how then, Dosikles, could I pass through the door/ and eat with so many men, being only one woman? *(12th c.). Before and after eating, the diners washed their hands and said a prayer. Cooks, wine-servers,* thermodotai *(providers of hot water) and other servants waited on the tables of the rich and made sure everything was provided for the meal.*

109. The Last Supper. Wall-painting.
Third quarter of the 14th c. Mystras, Peribleptos.



Whereas in most houses the kitchen also served as a storage area and a place in which food was prepared and consumed, there was a separate dining room called the trapezareion *in the* archontika. *In the Palace at Mystras this is on the upper storey and communicates with the kitchen on the ground floor by way of a narrow interior staircase. The particular room in the old wing of the palace has been identified with the kitchen since it contains three rainwater cisterns, a sink, and a hearth and cupboards, for preparing and storing food (Orlandos 1937, pp. 21-25).*

Various vessels were used for storing food, both liquid and dry (Bakirtzis 1989). The pithos *or* pithari *was the main storage jar. It was usually made of clay, though also of stone and sometimes took the form of a built structure set in the ground, with its inside coated with tar to protect it against damp. Barrels were used for the long-term storage of wine. Cheese, butter and salted meat or fish were kept in jars, vegetables were preserved in brine in* koureloi *and olives, beetroot and cream cheeses in* kouroupia. *Transport vessels such as* amphoras *or* magarika *were occasionally used for household storage purposes, for oil and wine, and* lagena *to carry water from the spring to the house.*

The Byzantines used mainly ceramic vessels made of a coarse, fireproof clay in which to prepare food. The most common was the cooking pot known as chytra, tsoukka *or* tsoukalion, *which had a lid (*epikythrion*) This was hermetically sealed with dough so that the food would cook quicker and then placed on the heart on a special metal tripod (*pyrostates*). For large quantities of food, the Byzantines preferred metal cauldrons (*kakkavia*). Fried food, like the famous* sphoungato *(a kind of omelette), was cooked in a frying pan (*teganion*), and the* teganostrophio, *was used to stir the food. The* saltsario *or* garario *was a special kind of self-heating vessel with two levels. Fire burned in the lower level and food was placed in the upper, and the pot was used to keep the sauces warm that were served mainly with boiled food.*

A wide range of tableware was used in serving food: deep and shallow bowls, cups and drinking glasses for everyday use, and also finer ones which were meticulously made and had refined decoration.

In addition to ceramic vessels, there were also some made of precious metals, which adorned the table of the emperor and nobles, officials and the wealthy, so that the dinners given by distinguished members of Byzantine society were experiences that catered for all the senses.

E.V.

with the collaboration of E.K.



"The creation of a Byzantine town - Care and conservation today"

"For what is made with craftsmanship is done more quickly and as it should be, and lasts in time. For a thing achieved by craft is done more quickly and more safely"

Anonymous, Strategikon (6th c.)

Of the towns of the Byzantine period, it is mainly the built environment that has survived to the present day, in the form of fortification walls, houses, palaces churches and monasteries - that is, the material remains of a life that no longer exists, an atmosphere that has been lost along with the inhabitants of the towns of the past. Nevertheless, these architectural structures are still the most valuable witnesses we have in attempting to understand the way of life of the people who used them, and the identity, interests and potential of those who erected them. In the case of the latter, they furnish more explicit evidence than any other source, since they bear the imprint of the presence and activities of their creators.

Since attention is already focussed, in the archaeological site of Mystras, on detailed features of the built environment and the way in which life was organised in a Byzantine town, the exhibition on the ground floor of the Palace concentrates on the use of visual aids and building materials to present the anonymous technicians who worked to create the town. The solid, richly decorated buildings of Mystras attest to the presence here of a large number of specialist craftsmen and are also clear evidence for the division

of labour in the sphere of construction work, the end products of which presuppose the collaboration of many different specialists. The mixed masonry styles of rubble or dressed stone blocks with bricks inserted either in horizontal courses or in a variety of decorative arrangements, the marble architectural sculptures, the vaulted structures with excellent decorative brickwork, the opus sectile floors, and a vast number of other details of the buildings at Mystras, especially the churches, called for expert knowledge and a loving respect for detail. Builders, plasterers, carpenters, iron-workers, and also marble-engravers, wall-painters, marble floor-tilers and a large number of other craftsmen worked to build and embellish the Byzantine urban centres. In the exhibition, they are presented in groups, with the attention focussed on the craftsmen themselves rather than their work. In this context, details are given of their daily life and the way their workteams were organised.

Faced with the problem of the preservation of the material remains of the past, particularly its architectural wealth, which is an important element of our cultural heritage, modern societies are continuously seeking for suitable ways in which to preserve and enhance these remains.

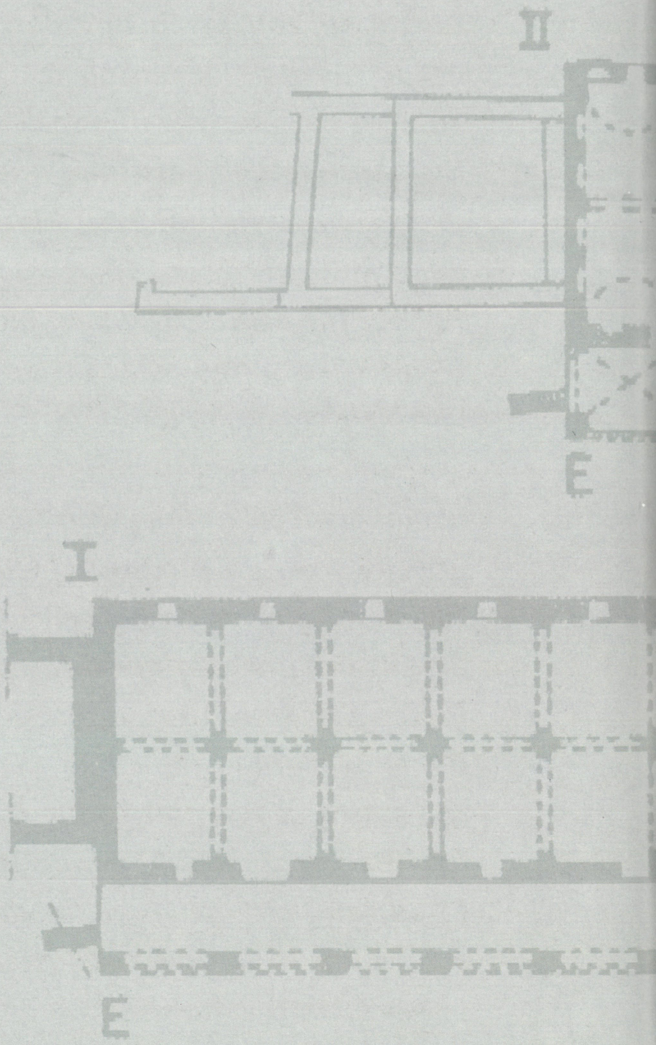
In the Byzantine town of Mystras, which has been included in the Worldwide Heritage List approved by UNESCO, extensive restoration work has been carried out over the last seventeen years by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, through the Committee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras.*

**Stephanos Sinos, president, Nikolaos Zias, Maria Fountoukou, Isidoros Kakoures, Nikos Minos, Aristea Kavvadia, Emilia Bakourou, members.*

Conservation work on the wall-paintings and other finds is carried out by the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities.

The site thus lends itself to a brief examination of the nature of the concerns and the preconditions attending all rescue work on monuments. The subject "Care and conservation today of a Byzantine town" is also examined, again through visual aids, on the ground floor of the Palace, corresponding with the unit "The Creation of a Byzantine Town".

Despite the length of time that has elapsed since the foundation of the town to the present day, the parameters for action with regard to building work aimed at the consolidation and restoration of the ancient buildings are still the same. The context for the work is set by the materials and building methods of the past. Similar materials are sought for the work in hand, so as to harmonise with the authentic kernel and avoid detracting from the aesthetic appearance and personality of the original building. The building materials predominantly used down to the beginning of the 20th century are often difficult to find today, since they have now been replaced by cement - artificial stone - aluminium and, generally speaking, by standardised elements. For the tiled roofs of Byzantine buildings, for example, old handmade tiles, the form of which did not change radically until about the middle of the 20th century, are often collected and reused. In the case of the palace and churches of Mystras, large Byzantine-type tiles were specially made to order,



based on the relevant archaeological material found on the site. Also, in order to achieve a binding mortar of similar texture, colour and behaviour, efforts were made to find materials similar to those used for the old mortar. In the buildings of the castle, use was made, as commonly in Byzantine times, of sand taken from a quarry in the area, which was located after an intensive search.

In addition to suitable materials, a further requirement is the existence of a workforce that has a knowledge of and fondness for traditional building techniques, which usually require more labour, patience and time. Modern craftsmen are called upon to follow in the tracks of the ancients to make a success of the project. The contribution made by these specialist craftsmen to the preservation of our architectural heritage is so vital that one of the basic policy aims in the sphere of the protection, conservation and enhancement of monuments must be the training and constant professional support of such craftsmen, since they cannot easily be found on the free market. The work at Mystras is being carried out by a well-organised team, appropriately staffed with experts, which has now acquired vast experience of restoration work.

Advanced expertise is also necessary for the conservation of wall-paintings, architectural sculptures, and other marble elements of the buildings, which is carried out alongside the restoration work.

One major unresolved question in Byzantine building

is the extent to which the builders followed a plan, and the role played by the architect. In contrast, planning is essential for any conservation work on a monument, since, though designed to preserve a building, such intervention nonetheless destroys some of the elements of its history. A preliminary study, documented as fully as possible, is the only weapon we have with which to protect these elements. The work should be preceded by detailed measured drawings of the building under conservation and a clear statement of the proposed intervention. Drawings, models, photographs, and so on, are the working tools of the modern architect.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that the philosophy underlying the conservation and enhancement of our architectural heritage has evolved over the course of the last 150 years, and reflects the attitudes and technical expertise of various periods. Today, both restorers and conservators go to great lengths to avoid the use of modern materials, whose behaviour and endurance have not been tested over time. Furthermore, support is given mainly to the consolidation and consequently the preservation of the building remains of the past, even if they are in fragmentary condition. Recourse is had to restoration only selectively, and where sufficient evidence is preserved to document the original form of the structure.

Tracing the steps taken in the past to respond to the needs of the work brings us face to face with an entire world.



110. Work-site in the Byzantine period. Detail from Skylitzes manuscript (cod. Vitr. 26-2, fol. 141^{v}a). 13th c. Spain, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional.

EM.B. - P.K.



110

Builders – Master-builders – Labourers

In the Byzantine empire, the builders, who made a fundamental contribution to every public or private edifice, were ordinary, anonymous craftsmen who are rarely mentioned by name in the literary sources (Mentzou 1975, pp. 169-177, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 56-57).

That they were organised in guilds, or *systems*, at least in the Early Christian period, is attested by an inscription of AD 459 from Sardis in Lykia, which refers to a guild of builders *(demosia taxis oikodomon)*, under the control of the city *ekdikos* (Mentzou 1975, pp. 174-176). In the Late Byzantine period, the existence of a professionally organised guild of builders in Thessalonike is attested by frequent references in documents on Mount Athos to George (Georgios) Marmaras with the title *master-craftsman of the builder* (Maksimović 1981, p. 162), Ousterhout 1999, pp. 49-50).

According to law, and the *Book of the Eparch*, guilds were not allowed to travel. In many cases, however, craftsmen did travel great distances to carry out a specific piece of work, often even outside the borders of the empire (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 55-56). At the end of the 4th century, Gregory of Nyssa sent a letter to Amphilochios, bishop of Ikonion, asking him to send the number of builders necessary to erect the martyrium of Nyssa (Pasquali 1959, pp. 79-83, Mango 1972, pp. 27-29). George Kodinos reports that craftsmen from Rome went to Constantinople to build the church of Hagios Polyeuktos (*PG* 157, 569). In the 6th century builders from Isauria, who were famous for their skill, worked in many areas from

111. Cloisonné masonry.
Mystras, Hagia Sophia.

112. The use of decorative brickwork relieved the Byzantines of the labour of dressing stones and was a quick, easy solution.
Mystras, Hagioi Theodoroi.

111



Constantinople to Antioch (Mango 1966, Magoulias 1976, pp. 11-12, Sodini 1979, p. 76). Builders from Constantinople were sent to Greece in the Middle Byzantine period to undertake ambitious building projects (Ousterhout 1999, p. 51). During the execution of a project a number of people intervened between the employer and the builder, playing roles that consisted partly of the management of financial matters –payments, supplies of materials– and partly of supervising the work on site (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 46-49). No clear distinction is drawn in the literary sources between their responsibilities (Magoulias 1976, p. 13), and the terms *architecton, ergodioktes, epistekon,* and *ergolabos* are used interchangeably. Contracting parties secured their interests by the signature of contracts that determined the size of the job, delivery date and cost. Gregory of Nyssa, as a contractor, attempted to protect his interests by signing a contract of this kind (Pasquali 1959, pp. 82-83, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 304-305), while, for their part, builders would not start a job until *some agreement had been reached about wages* (Moutsopoulos 1992, p. 445).

Lack of professionalism and poor workmanship seem to have been common, and efforts were made to deal with this kind of eventuality, either through the guilds, in early times (Mentzou 1975, pp. 174-176) or later through more broadly applicable legislation, such as that recorded in the *Book of the Eparch*, which attempted to guarantee the punctual and safe execution of the job agreed. If, for example, a building collapsed within a decade from other than natural causes, the builder was obliged to reconstruct it at his own expense. In the case of a major project, the contractor responsible

had to rebuild it along with the other builders, using materials supplied by the employer (Koder 1991, pp.140-142). A 15th century manuscript containing arithmetic exercises speaks of a master-craftsman who in the end received no pay at all for building a house, because the sum of money due to him was the same as the sum he owed the employer for his frequent absences from work; *this is what happens to those who neglect their work.* (Hunger – Vogel 1963, p. 56).

Whether or not a work-team was organised depended on the size of the project, the financier, and his ambitions (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 50-55). The head of the work-team was usually the master-craftsmen *(protomaistros or maistros)* who gave instructions to the labourers and the paid or unpaid apprentices. One hundred master-craftsmen worked on the erection of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, each with one hundred labourers under him (*PG* 157, 620, Mango 1972, p. 96). To build the church of the Panagia in the Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phokis, eighty *protomaistores* were employed, each with eighty apprentices (Boura 1980, p. 9). These numbers are exaggeratedly high, since in the 9th century St Euthymios built a church with only three or four workmen (Petit 1904, pp. 38-39); they do, however, reflect the hierarchy to be found in a building programme.

Work began with the digging of the foundations and a check on the subsoil to deal with any possible problems *so that the foundation should not be rotten* (Koder 1991, p. 140, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 157-169); cases are even cited of rocks being broken up by fire and vinegar to level a



112

113, 114. Byzantine builders worked with different kinds of masonry, such as rubble alternating with zones of brick (Mystras, Hodegetria) or simple rubble masonry (Mystras, Palace wing A).

113



114



site (Magoulias 1976, pp. 21-22). The building work was always carried out by two builders, the more competent of them working on the exterior face of the wall and the other on the interior, both of them standing on wooden scaffolding. This was dangerous and accidents were common (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 185-186). It is said, for example, that during the erection of a church, demons shook the scaffolding, causing one of the workmen to fall, luckily without injuring himself (Petit 1904, pp. 39-40). The materials were carried to the builders by assistants: *hypourgoi, proscherarioi,* and *operai* (see chapter on plasterers). Sometimes even apprenticed children were used for these ancillary jobs (*PG* 157, 621, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 52-53). Amongst the basic tools used were the trowel *(mystrion),* the plumb-line *(barydion),* the pickaxe and the builder's hammer, which differed little from their modern counterparts. While they were working, builders wore short sleeveless tunics tied around their waist (Orlandos 1955, p. 337).

Builders had also to be good stonemasons (see relevant chapter), and they occasionally had to find the stones they needed themselves (Magoulias 1976, p. 15). Because of the demands of the financiers of the projects and the complex architectural drawings, they also had to be specialists. Gregory of Nyssa searches for builders specialising in the construction of vaults without the use of timber centring (Pasquali 1959, p. 81).

The builder decided on the building technique to be used, in the light of the local building tradition and the materials available in the region. Gregory of Nyssa tells us that he will in the end opt for a brick structure because of the lack of suitable material in the area of Nyssa (Pasquali 1959, pp. 81-82).

Builders were completely indispensable in time of war, and soldiers, ordinary people, and even clergy and monks often helped out with building projects (Magoulias 1976, pp. 15, 20-21, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 47, 53, 54).

The wages paid to builders and non-specialist labourers varied according to the area, period, and of course the supply and demand for their work (Cheynet, Malamut, Morrisson 1991, p. 372 pl. 12). Their income was certainly low, and they only just managed to survive, given the price of the basic necessities (Mango 1990, pp. 53-54). At the end of the 4th century a group of workmen asked Gregory of Nyssa for one gold coin per day plus food, as wages for building a church. Gregory felt this to be too high and looked for cheaper hands outside the region of Nyssa where, given the shortage of expert craftsmen, inflated wages were demanded (Pasquali 1959, no. 25, pp. 79-83, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 304). In the 6th century, the emperor Anastasios built a town in Mesopotamia as a strategic base against the Persians and offered very high wages to the builders -1/6 of a coin, or 1/3 of a coin for a workman and his donkey per day, as a result of which, "many of them became very rich" (Mango 1990, p. 53).

In the 10th century, the contract signed between the employer and builders for the construction of the katholikon of the Monastery of the Eikosiphoinissa envisaged a fee of 100 gold coins for the entire guild, which included builders (Moutsopoulos 1992, p. 445). In 1306/ 1307, during the Late Byzantine period, the master-builder of the church of the

115. The use of two different kinds of masonry in the same building is quite common at Mystras. Mystras, Hagioi Theodoroi.

116. Byzantine builders incorporated a wide range of decorative elements into the wall surfaces. Mystras, Metropolis.

Virgin Ljeviška at Prizren, the builder Nicholas (Nikolaos), was paid in kind, in flour and salt (Kalopisis-Verti 1997, p. 153). A little later, in 1401/1402, during the erection of the church and campanile of the Bebaias Elpidos (Sure Hope) Monastery in Constantinople, 200 hyperpyra were expended on *tiles, nails, lime, and other relevant expenses* (Delehaye 1921, p. 104, Laïou 1991, p. 292).
In cases where the financier was unable to pay the sum agreed, the sources speak of violent reactions by the builders. St Germanos was taken to court, and in the end the money owed was paid by two emissaries of the state, who met the builders on their way to the ruler of the region (Moutsopoulos 1992, p. 445-446); and when the craftsmen had to be paid at Sparta, St Nikon agreed to be taken in chains to the town, until the wealthy residents volunteered to provide the required sum (Lampsidis 1982, p. 76).



115



116

117. The lifting of a column with the aid of a pulley. Psalterion (cod. Par. Gr. 20, fol. 4r). 857-865. France, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

117



Quarrymen – Stone masons – Marble-carvers

In the literary sources, at least those of the early period, the term *lithoxooi* is applied both to the craftsmen who quarried the stone and dressed it, and to sculptors (Mentzou 1975, pp. 192-194). From the 10th century onwards, it lost its specific meaning and came to include builders in general (Kazhdan 1991 B, p. 1311).

The work began far away from the building site, in the quarries where the quarrymen *(latomoi* or *latypoi)* extracted and worked the stone, for the supply of building material was essential to the successful accomplishment of the ambitious building programmes of the emperors (Mentzou 1975, pp. 186-188). Michael Psellos states that in order to erect the Monastery of the Peribleptos 'every mountain was quarried, and the art of the quarryman was held higher than philosophy itself' (Renault 1926-28, vol. I, p. 41). The living conditions of the men who worked in the quarries were poor and use was probably made of prisoners-of-war, working under the supervision of soldiers (Sodini 1979, p. 102). Symbols were carved on the building material, probably corresponding with the initials of the head of the quarry. These are of great help in establishing the scale of exports and the trade in quarried stone (Sodini 1979, p. 77). The manner in which the quarries were worked was determined by legal regulations (Moutsopoulos 1992, p. 452).

The quarrying of marble and other precious stones was a special case, and required more complex processes, a large work force, and an organised system for transporting and trading the material. The state retained a monopoly in the ex-

118. Marble doorframe with relief decoration. Second half of 14th c. Mystras, Evangelistria.

119. Relief disk made of poros, a soft stone also used to decorate Byzantine buildings at Mystras.

traction of such stone, though this was not very strictly observed (Sodini 1979, p. 101). The important quarries included those of Prokonnesos in Constantinople, and those of Paros, Thessaly and Lakedaimonia in Greece (Sodini 1979, pp.76-77). In the case of the Prokonnesos quarry, which was worked incessantly from the middle of the 2nd to the 6th century, some of the architectural members intended for specific buildings were carved and fully decorated in imperial workshops founded on the site, before being sent to Constantinople, while others were partly worked before they were transported, and were finished just before being placed in position on the building (Asgari 1995, pp. 267, 269). However, the reduction in the population and the economic problems of the 6th and 7th century made it impossible for most of the quarries to continue to function, and the Byzantines turned to reusing earlier building material, a practice that extended even to cheaper materials (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 137-145, Kalamara 2001, pp. 36-38). Reference is frequently made in the lives of saints to instances of columns being taken from ancient buildings; in one such case, a column got out of control and began to fall, threatening the workers carrying it, until St Bartholomew the Younger intervened and ordered it to stop (Ousterhout 1999, p. 146).

Special roads were laid to transport stone from the place it was quarried to the building under construction, and examples

118



119



are also recorded of monks forming a chain to carry the stones (Magoulias 1976, p. 15). When the material reached the work site it was given its final form by the masons and also by the builders themselves. The craftsmen naturally worked with a variety of materials, both hard and soft, including limestone, conglomerate, volcanic rocks, marble, and the natural stone found in each region. Special techniques, expertise and skill were required to extract and dress the stone. St Nicholas of Sion successfully instructed the lithotomoi in their work, and *even the stones obeyed him*, according to his biography. The monk Artemas, on the other hand, failed to move a large rock, even with the help of several workmen (Magoulias 1976, p. 14). The life of St Symeon Stylites the Younger refers to a monk named John (Ioannes) who undertook to make the column capitals for the katholikon of the monastery, though he had no previous experience in stone-carving, and relied simply on the *spirit of wisdom* conveyed in prayer; it is probable, however, that in his secular life, John had been a stonemason and was thus able to help to complete the monastery building (Magoulias 1976, p. 18, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 310-311).

Once the building had been erected, the stone-masons worked on the architectural members incorporated in it either as structural features (columns, capitals, doorframes and cornices) or as individual liturgical elements *(templa, proskynetaria).* They employed a wide variety of techniques and drew their iconographic vocabulary from a broad, continually expanding repertoire. Only a few of them, such as *Niketas the marble worker,* or *George (Georgios) the master-*

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120. Marble icon-stand with rich sculptured decoration. Late 12th-early 13th c. Mystras, Metropolis.

121. Part of the revetment of the church of the Hodegetria, with champlevé decoration. Preserved in situ. Mystras.

121



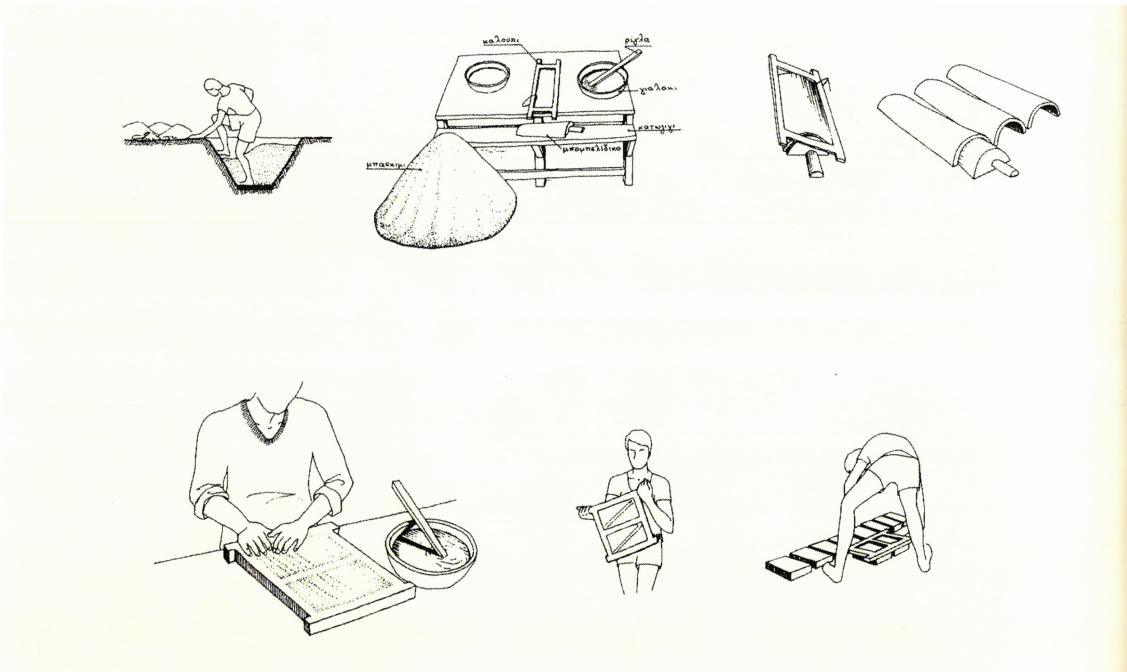
craftsman from the Mani, and the *master-craftsman Koetos the maïstros* from Naxos, have left their names on their work (Drandakis 1972, Mastoropoulos 1994). The tools used by stone masons included, inter alia, the ruler and bevel for dressing the stone, hammers, and points. Quarrying techniques changed little over the centuries (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 137-138). To raise stone blocks and architectural members, use was made of simple machines-pulleys *(trochalies)* or large beams used as levers, as recorded in the life of St Symeon Stylites the Younger (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. II, p. 201, Orlandos 1955, pp. 334-336, Magoulias 1976, p. 21). Particular care was required when joining marble members together with metal clamps; the stone mason Katakalos was blinded during this process, but was healed by St Photeine (Halkin 1989, p. 120).

With regard to wages, the *edict of Diocletian* (AD 301) provided for a daily wage of 50 denarii for stone workers. In the 6th century in Egypt, the craftsman Eulogios received a daily wage of one *keration*. This sum was enough to pay the rent on his house, and also for acts of charity, though it remained the same from his youth until his old age (Magoulias 1976, p. 15). In the life of St Symeon Stylites the Younger reference is made to a quarryman from Isauria who received an eye injury, presumably from a fragment of stone, at the same time losing his savings of 12 gold coins, and turned to the saint in despair, grieving more for the money he had lost. The saint healed him and when he returned home he also found the money, though we do not know how long it had taken him to save it (Magoulias 1976, pp. 13-14, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 306).

122. The manufacture and cutting of bricks and tiles (Theocharidou 1985-86, p. 25).

123. Tiles fired in kilns. Manuscript (cod. Vat. Gr. 746, fol. 61r). 12th c. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

122



123



Tilers – Brickworkers

These men worked virtually the whole year round producing ceramic building materials, such as bricks and brickwork decoration, floor tiles, roof tiles and waterspouts and clay pipes. Their products were delivered in finished form to the building under construction and incorporated in the masonry, floors and roofs at various stages of the construction work. They were used mainly as structural elements, though in some cases, like the decorative brickwork, they also served as adornment (Velenis 1984, Tsouris 1988).

Although they are not mentioned in the *Book of the Eparch* amongst the other sub-contractors, these craftsmen played an essential role in the building chain and were probably organised in guilds (Ousterhout 1999, p. 131, Theocharidou 1985-1986, p. 111).

The workshops in which tile-makers carried out their job were sited so as to be near the raw materials (clay and water) and also to make it easy to transport and distribute the finished products. Tile workshops were therefore located outside the towns, often at the entrance to them, and near roads, rivers or ports (Theocharidou 1985-1986, pp. 97-98). In 952, a workshop for the *convenient manufacture of tiles* is mentioned on the coast at the Great Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos (Actes de Lavra, p. 101); another workshop near a beach in Chalkidike is recorded in documents of the Iviron Monastery (Actes d'Iviron, pp. 128, 178).

The risk of fire, the smoke produced, and the unpleasant smell emitted by clay while being fired obliged the Byz-

124. Byzantine tile kilns have a variety of shapes (Theocharidou 1985-86, p. 27).

125. Part of a large tile with the imprint of the palm of a hand. Mystras.

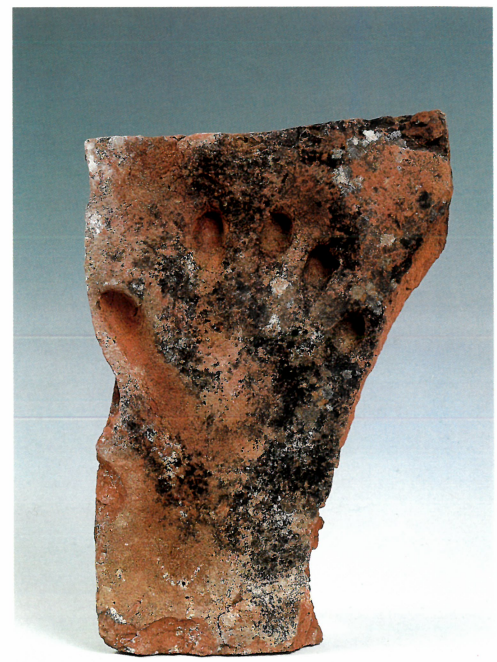
126. Lavish decorative brickwork in the superstructure of a church. Mystras, Hodegetria.

antines to pass legislation fixing the minimum distances to be maintained between tile-factories and residential areas (Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, pp. 126-128).

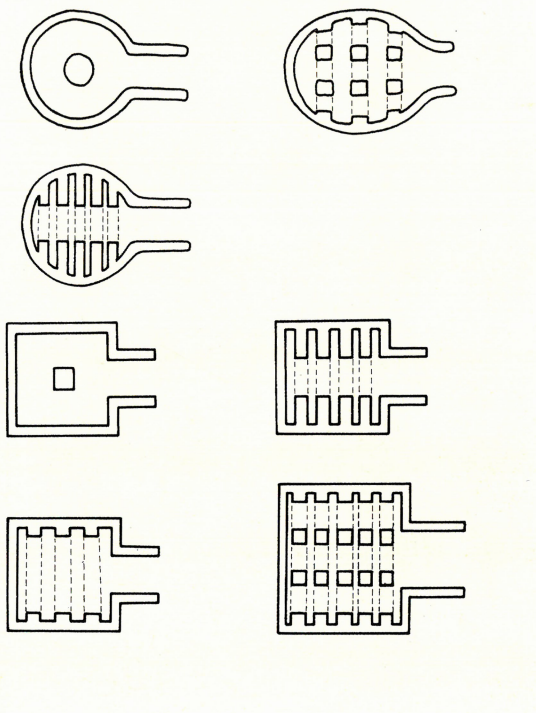
The productive process, which was almost identical with that for pottery production, in which the master potter worked with assistants, included extracting and preparing the clay, shaping the product in a mould, drying, and firing in a built kiln or in piles in the open air (Theocharidou 1985-1986, pp. 100-109). The literary sources attest to the existence of private workshops and units run by monasteries (Mentzou 1975, pp. 92-93, 176-177). In 952, a tile-factory was sold to the abbot of Peristeron Monastery in Thessalonike for three *chrysina*, a fairly low price for the period (Evangelatou-Notara 1982, p. 18). However, tiles bearing stamps with the names of emperors point to the existence of state workshops, too (Mango 1950, Vickers 1973, Sodini 1979, pp. 73-75 and Bardill 1995, pp. 28-29).

Since brick-makers used few, easily carried tools, it is not impossible that they were itinerant craftsmen. According to Theophanes, five hundred *ostrakarioi* from Greece and the islands, and two hundred tile-makers from Thrace went to the capital to repair the aqueduct of Valens in 766-767 (De Boor 1883-85, p. 440).

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124



126



127. Carpenters at work. Detail from a mosaic depiction of Noah's Ark. 13th c. Italy, Venice, San Marco.

Carpenters – Tektones – Sawyers

The work of these men began far from the building site, with the felling and preparation of suitable timber. In the life of St Nicholas of Sion five specialist craftsmen were summoned from a nearby town to saw up a huge cypress-tree, after which the inhabitants took the timber to the monastery in the region, probably to use it in building works (Magoulias 1976, p. 17).

The material was brought to the work site, where a craftsman, probably a specialist, called the *skalotes* (Orlandos 1955, p. 337), and perhaps also the *tektones* and builders, made the scaffolding that would be used by all the craftsmen on the site. The scaffolding had to be strongly made in the interests of the safety of the craftsmen who stood on them. They often collapsed, however, taking the workmen with them, as we learn from the lives of the saints (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 185-186). St Athanasios of Athos and six more monks lost their lives in an accident of this nature (Noret 1982, p. 201).

When the walls of the building began to rise, specialist carpenters made wooden frames for the arches and vaults, and prepared the timber tie-beams and framing, which the builders incorporated into the masonry to strengthen the structure. (Ousterhout 1999, p. 192-194, 210-218). After this they made the timber frame for the roof, and the floors and door and window frames (Sodini 1979, pp. 86-87). Finally, carpenters worked in large urban centres on the construction of houses made entirely of wood (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. IV, p. 260).

Like almost all the other craftsmen, the *tektones* wore short tunics girt around the waist when they were working (Orlandos 1955, p. 332).

Their tools, which are almost identical to those used today, include at least two kinds of saw *(kourastari and katarraktes),* an axe, two kind of adze, a drill for making holes in the wood, a plane, a wood-ham-



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128. Imprints of timber frames used to reinforce the masonry. Mystras.

129. Beam-sockets: holes in the walls in which were seated the large beams that carried the wooden floors of the houses. Mystras.

mer, a chisel, and a level (Orlandos 1955, pp. 329-334, Kazhdan – Cutler 1991, p. 383, Ousterhout 1999, p. 282, note 59). The reference in the *Book of the Eparch* to *leptourgoi,* the equivalent of modern cabinet-makers, amongst the other craftsmen-contractors, probably suggests that the carpenters who worked on building sites were professionally organised (Koder 1991, p. 138). The majority of these craftsmen, too, remain anonymous, with very few mentioned by name in the literary sources (Mentzou 1975, pp. 185-186, 189-190, Ousterhout 1999, p. 57). From the 10th century onwards, the distinction between *tekton*, builder and stone mason is blurred (Kazhdan – Cutler 1991, pp. 382-383).

With regard to wages, *tektones* were paid 50 denarii per day, according to the *edict of Diocletian* prescribing the official wages paid to various craftsmen (AD 301) (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1997, p. 21).



128



129

130. Metal clamps. Mystras.

Metalworkers – Blacksmiths – Bronzesmiths

These men worked in permanent smithies making a range of materials –nails, clamps, wedges, rings– that were incorporated in the masonry or architectural members of the building under construction, and also window-frames, accessories and facing of doors and windows, which remained visible on the façades (Bouras 1975, pp. 248-249, Magoulias 1976, pp. 16-17, Sodini 1979, p. 85, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 146, 211-216). They also made and repaired the tools used by all the other craftsmen. Reference is also made to workshops specialising in the manufacture of metal sheets to cover roofs, which were the most expensive but also the most durable form of roofing (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 148-151). In the middle of the 11th century, the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos responded to a request from the abbot of the Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos by sending lead, expropriated from the imperial arsenal, to cover the roof of the church of the Virgin.

Indispensable items of equipment in a smithy included the kiln, anvil, bellows, crucibles for melting the metal, and hammers (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. II.1, pp. 218-219, Pljakov 1986, pp. 51-52, Kazhdan 1991 C, p. 1919).

The blacksmith's work was regarded as dangerous and unhealthy, since high temperatures were reached in the smithies and there was a risk of fire. Legislation therefore required that they be located in isolated areas (Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, pp. 130-131). One blacksmith complains that he has laboured and struggled at this wretched craft since he was a child (Magoulias 1976, pp. 22-23), though some, like the bronzesmith Matthew (Matthaios) in the middle of the 14th century, who paid a rent of over 14 coins, attained a certain financial ease (Kazhdan 1991 C, p. 1918). Blacksmiths were regarded as essential in a town, and entire neighbourhoods in Constantinople and Thessalonike were named after the smiths who worked there (Kazhdan 1991 C, p. 1918). About the end of the 12th century, Michael Choniates complains that Athens *did not have a bellows and we do not even have a blacksmith or bronzesmith* (Pljakov 1986, p. 50, note 69).

There were important smithies in the Balkans already in the Early Christian period (Sodini 1979, p. 85). Some monasteries seem to have owned them, including the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, which is stated in 1347 to have owned an iron foundry in the area (Pljakov 1986, pp. 47-48).

130



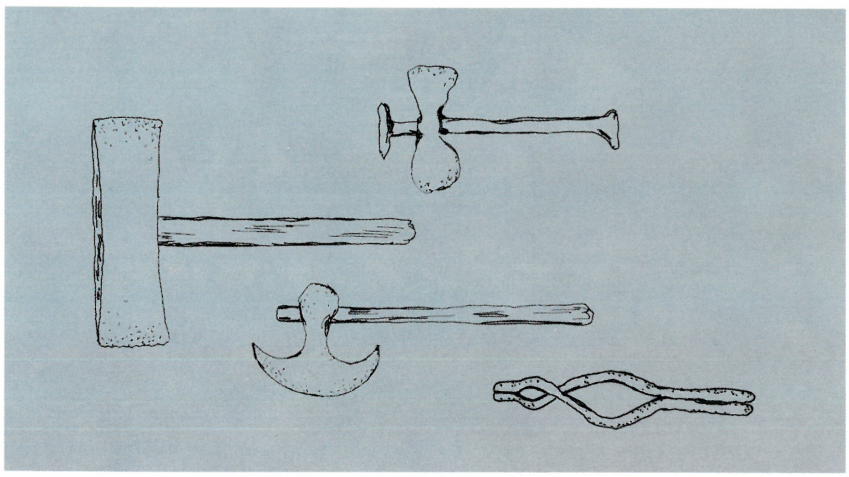
131. Nails of various sizes were used at every phase of the erection of a building. Mystras.

132. The tools used or made by Byzantine blacksmiths resemble those still used today. Reconstruction drawing of tools depicted in Byzantine wall-paintings by Marina Georgountzou.

133. Blacksmith at work. Sacra Parallela of John of Damascus (cod. Par. Gr. 923, fol. 335r). 800-840. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



131



132



133

Plasterers



134

These men worked on the building during the final phase of its construction, making the plaster that covered the interior and often also the exterior surfaces of the walls, for the rubble masonry was usually plastered with mortar on which the craftsmen frequently scratched decorative patterns with their trowel. (Scranton 1957, p. 99, Ousterhout 1999, p. 179). In some cases, a specialist craftsmen called the *koniates* decorated individual elements of the facades with geometric patterns (Sodini 1979, p. 79, note 57).

The plaster was made on the spot, in pits in which the various ingredients were mixed (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 134-135). There was a great variety of plasters, depending on the purpose and the part of the building for which it was intended. George Kodinos (*PG* 157, 620) reports the constituents of a special type of plaster, though even today in certain parts of Greece the constituents of plaster are kept secret and handed on by word of mouth from woman to woman within the same family (Moutsopoulos 1992, pp.454-455).

Plasterer's assistants *(proscheraioi, operai)* carried plaster on their shoulders in baskets, on trays, or in tubs, or used ropes to lift it up to the scaffolding where the craftsmen were working. To relieve the weight, the workmen wore a shoulder-pad *(prosomin),* as is clear from a verse of Ptochoprodromos *take off your priest's robe and become a labourer, wear a pad on your shoulder and carrry plaster* (Eideneier 1991, p. 129). The life of St Photeine reports an accident involving a worker who fell while carrying a tub full of plaster; the worker was miraculously un-



134. Various craftsmen at work. Two men in the foreground are making plaster. Mosaic with a depiction of the construction of the tower of Babel. 1143. Italy, Palermo, Palatine Chapel.

135. A very strong plaster called kourasani, with tile inclusions, was used in cisterns. Mystras, spring in the area in front of the palace.

136. At Mystras, window-frames were often emphasised by plaster bearing painted decoration. Mystras, Lower Town, house.

135



harmed, but the tub was shattered (Halkin 1989, p. 121).

Lime, one of the basic ingredients in plaster, was prepared in a lime kiln. Though no Byzantine kilns of this kind have been excavated, their use is attested in the literary sources (Magoulias 1976, pp. 15-16). In the life of St Nikon, for example, the man responsible for supplying plaster for the construction of a church is ordered in a dream to burn *two more kilns* (Lampsidis 1982, pp. 253-254). According to the law, lime kilns had to be located far away from residential areas, since the smoke they produced was considered to be polluting (Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, p. 129).

In the case of some structures, such as cisterns and water-works in general, the plasterers assumed responsibility for the entire construction. The plasterer Mamas was responsible for the construction of a cistern and a structure to channel the water in the lavra of St Sabbas, according to the saint's life (Magoulias 1976, p. 16). The two hundred plasterers who came from Pontos to Constantinople in 766-767 to repair the aqueduct of Valens remain anonymous (De Boor 1883-85, p. 440).

137, 138. Fragments of wall-paintings from a chapel at Mystras.

139. The signature of the painter Konstantinos Manasses is preserved in the wall-paintings of the old katholikon of the Hagioi Saranda Monastery. 1305. Chrysapha of Lakonia.

Painters

Wall-paintings, which were an inseparable part of any church building and were also a means of luxurious ostentation and a privilege enjoyed by the powerful in their private houses (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 296-298), were the final element in the image projected by a building, and they often reveal collaboration and mutual influences between architects, builders and painters (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 244-254).

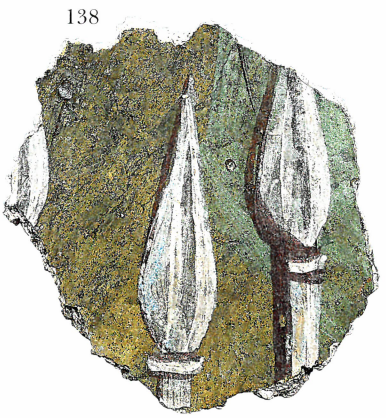
Painters were looked upon as ordinary craftsmen and were not recognised as "artists" (Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 154-155, Oikonomides 1997, p. 109). In the *Book of the Eparch*, indeed, they are classified with the other construction professions (Koder 1991, p. 138). Several of them, who had a special talent, naturally achieved social recognition and financial ease, particularly during the Late Byzantine period (Cutler 1991, p. 196, Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 155-157).

The profession of painter was exclusively a male one, since it formed part of the building chain, and it was practised by clerics, monks and laymen (Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 146-148, 151). Women engaged only in the painting of portable icons, and possibly also in the illumination of manuscripts –work that did not require them to travel away from their home or workshop. Sons might follow in their father's footsteps and inherit their tools. In his will of 1436, the Cretan painter Angelos Akotantos bequeaths the tools of his work and his designs to the child to be born to him,

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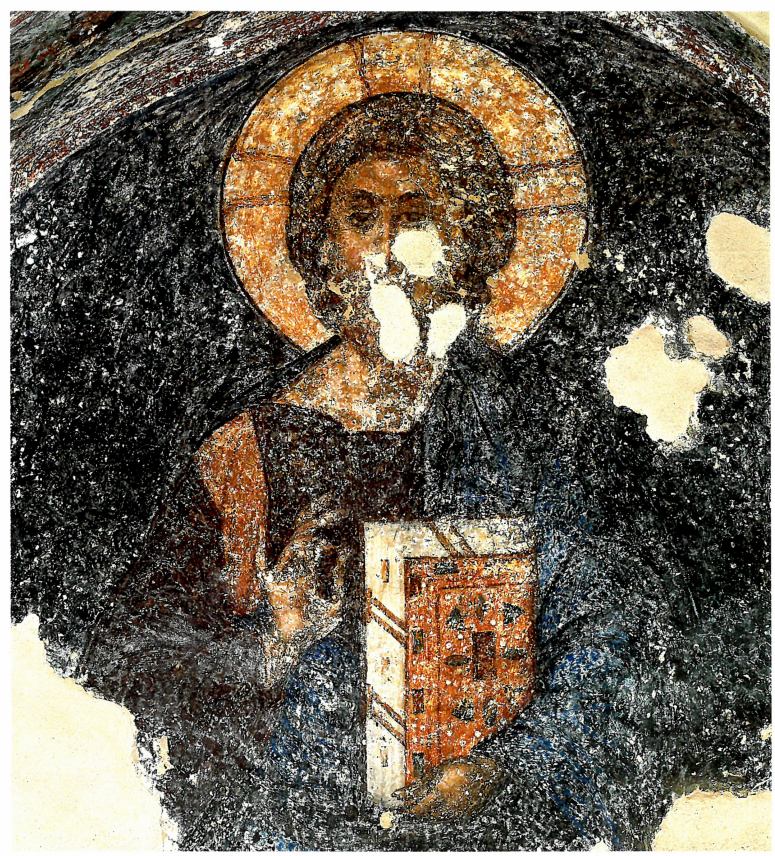


140. St Peter of Alexandria. Wall-painting. Early 14th c. Mystras, Hagios Demetrios.

141. Christ Enthroned. Wall-painting. Second half of the 14th c. Mystras, Hagia Sophia, SE chapel.



140



141

if it is a boy, otherwise he leaves them to his brother (Vasilaki 1997, p. 164). Painters, whether working alone, in small groups, or frequently organised in family guilds, travelled both inside and beyond the borders of the empire (Cutler 1991, pp. 197-198, Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 148-150). They normally worked in the summer months, from May to October. At the first stage of their work they prepared the surface to receive the painted decoration, using successive layers of plaster. After this, while the substratum was still wet, they executed the design and *proplasmos* on it (fresco), and then painted the details, using the fresco secco technique, starting from the higher points and working downwards. In a single day, they might cover an area ranging from six to nine square metres (Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 153-154). Theophanes the Greek and his guild completed the painted decoration of the church of the Annunciation in the Kremlin, Moscow (1405), in a single season (Cutler 1991, p. 197).

Painters found their materials in nature. They also made use of working drawings, which were considered of great value and were passed between the members of the same work-team or sold (Vasilaki 1997, p. 195). In the lives of saints there are frequent cases in which the portrait of the saint was executed after the painter had received divine inspiration (Asimakopou-lou-Atzaka 1988, p. 307, Kazhdan – Maguire 1991, pp. 4-9, Oikonomides 1997, pp. 109-110). Contracts between the commissioner of the work and the painter defined the extent of the work, the date of de-



142

livery, and the fee. A group of painters from Constantinople who went to the monastery of the Cave in Kiev to decorate a church threatened to cancel the contract when they saw that the church was much bigger than had been originally described (Mango 1972, pp. 221-222, Oikonomides 1997, pp. 110-111). The contracts signed in Crete in the 14th and 15th century are even more detailed (Kazanaki-Lappa 1993, pp. 435-438).
The trade was learned through an apprenticeship lasting many years with an experienced painter who provided housing, food and clothing (Kalopisi-Verti 1997, p. 152). There is also reference to a woman who taught painting for a fee (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 306).



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There was no strict specialisation, and a wall-painter might also paint portable icons or illustrate manuscripts (Cutler 1991, p. 197, Kalopisi-Verti 1997, p. 154). As for payment, the *edict of Diocletian* (AD 301) states that the daily wage for a wall-painter is 75 denarii and for an "iconographer" 150 denarii; the latter probably painted the main representations and was perhaps also responsible for the overall iconographic programme (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1997, p. 20). There is little evidence from the Byzantine period for the cost of the mural decoration of a church or the fee given to wall-painters, who were sometimes paid in kind, in flour, salt, etc. (Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 152-153). Judging by the prices of portable icons, however, painters do not seem to have been highly paid (Oikonomides 1991).
According to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, at Nicaea in 787, the contribution of the painter is restricted to his craft, and the arrangement [of the scences] is due to the Fathers who build [the churches] (Mango 1972, p. 172, Panayiotidi 1997, p. 78); the relationship between painter and patron was fluid, however, and the degree of independence exercised by the former in executing the painted decoration of a church varied (Panayiotidi 1997, pp. 77-78). Throughout the entire Byzantine period the builder-patron determined the general content of the iconographic programme, but the painter intervened in some cases to select particular subjects (Kalopisi-Verti 1993-94, p. 140, Panayiotidi 1997, pp. 98-102). Down to the 12th century, at least, painters remained large-

142. The Wedding at Cana. Wall-painting. c.1315. Mystras, Hodegetria.

143. Christ the Giver of Life, enthroned, on the apse of the church of Hagia Sophia. Wall-painting. Third quarter of the 14th c. Mystras.

144. Choir of Angels. Detail from the Last Judgement. Wall-painting. Early 14th c. Mystras, Hagios Demetrios.

145. The prophet Ezekiel. Wall-painting. 1270-1285. Mystras, Hagios Demetrios.

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ly anonymous (Cutler 1991, pp. 198-201, Oikonomides 1997, p. 111). In the Late Byzantine period, their improved social and economic status was accompanied by more frequent signing of their work, though this still did not bridge the wide gap separating them from the important patrons (Kalopisi-Verti 1997, pp. 122-144). This same spirit accounts for the lack of depictions of painters in monumental painting, in contrast with the patrons (Kalopisi-Verti 1993-94, p. 28). "Known" painters are only found in the 15th century, in Crete under Venetian rule, where the changes in this sphere taking place in western Europe were followed (Vasilaki 1997, p. 28a).

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146. Marble-worker at his work-bench. Late Roman relief. Italy, Rome, National Museum (drawing by Irini Kiousi).

Mosaicists / Marble-engravers / Glaziers / Plaster-makers

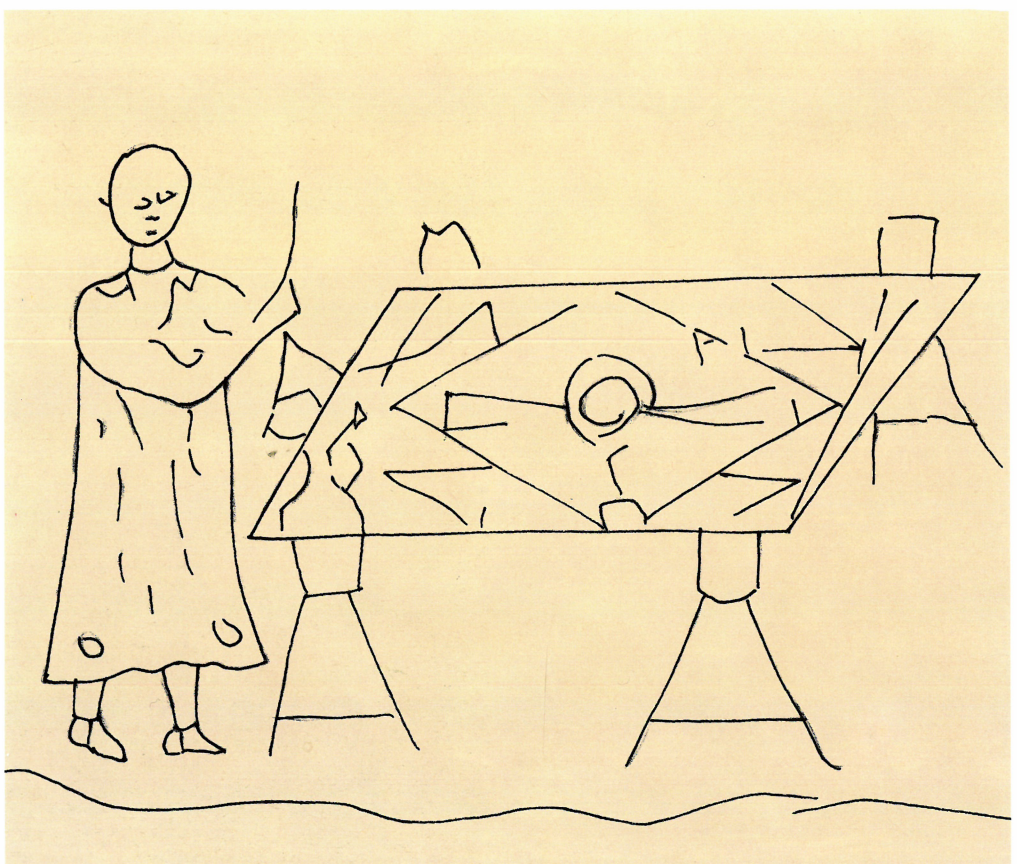
When the building was almost complete, various groups of craftsmen set to work to give it its final form. Some were engaged on the interior decoration, which was particularly important in the case of church buildings (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 296-297, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 22-23, 234-235).

Mosaicists decorated the walls and floor with mosaics, a very expensive technique, though one that produced a luxurious result. Mosaicists worked in local or itinerant teams, possibly organised in guilds, as attested by inscriptions (Sodini 1979, p. 79, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1993, pp. 31-44, 59, 68-73). The extensive building programmes of towns in the early period were conducive to the development of mosaic workshops (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, p. 10). Some guilds acquired great fame and travelled both inside and outside the empire to execute their commissions (Cutler 1991 C, p. 1413). At the beginning of the 8th century, craftsmen from Constantinople decorated the Grand Mosque in Damascus (Gioles 1991, pp. 88-89). At the time of Nikephoros Phokas a team of mosaicists carrying coloured tesserae with them travelled to Spain to work on the mosque at Cordoba (Moutsopoulos 1992, p. 497). In 1070, the bishop of Monte Cassino asked for craftsmen from Constantinople to work on mosaics (Kazhdan – Epstein 1985, p. 44).

Some mosaicists are mentioned by name in the literary sources. One of them, Ephraim, decorated the basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the year 1169, and another, Eulalios, renovated the mosaic decoration of the church of the Hagioi Apostoloi (Holy Apostles) in Constantinople in the 12th century (Cutler 1991 A, p. 798, Id. 1991 B, p. 745). Most of them, however, remained anonymous, like the youth who severely injured his arm while working on the house of a wealthy citizen of Amasia in Pontos (Magoulias 1976, pp. 18-19).

The craftsmen made the tesserae, of coloured or semiprecious stones, marble, or glass paste, in their workshop, before going to work on the building itself. For wall mosaics, they prepared the surface to be decorated, usually giving it three layers of plaster. The tesserae were set in the final layer, following a preliminary drawing of the composition, made while the plaster was still wet. The mosaics in the apse of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople required about 2.5 million tesserae, and a craftsman might cover an area of up to four square metres a day, depending on the size of the tesserae he was using (Cutler 1991 C, p. 1412). According to modern calculations, a group of eight mosaicists must have worked, in three periods, on the mosaics of the church of Saint Sophia in Kiev (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 240-241). Teams of mosaicists probably contained members who ranked higher in the hierarchy and directed the work (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1993, pp. 34-37). In the case of mosaic floors, there is evidence of painters and mosaicists working together to

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produce complex representations, while it is probable that "pattern books" were used for identically repeated floral or geometric motifs (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, p. 42).

In the late 6th-early 7th century, the production of mosaic floors came to an end throughout almost the whole of Greece (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, p. 25), while wall-mosaics became very popular after this time.

Another group of specialist craftsmen were responsible for the internal marble-work, revetment and floor-paving which lent the space an air of great opulence and luxury. In his description of the Nea Ekklesia (New Church) at Constantinople, Theophanes Continuatus declares that the floor gave the impression of being covered with silk textiles (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1978, pp. 263-264).

These marble-workers were also organised in guilds that travelled for work purposes, as is attested by the case of Leontios. He was the head of a work-team that revetted the walls of a house owned by a wealthy citizen of Antioch, and later he went to Seleukeia to work on the martyrium of St Thekla; one day, the scaffolding on which they were working collapsed and all the men apart from Leontios were killed (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 298-299, 303). The various stages of their work included cutting the slabs of marble and joining them together (probably in the workshop), working on them near the building to be decorated and fixing them to the surface, using a special, strong mortar and metal clamps or pins, and finally, smoothing them off (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1980, pp. 4-12, Ousterhout 1999, pp. 235-239).

The work of the glaziers, who prepared

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147, 148. Some sculptures were inlaid with other materials, such as wax-and-mastic, which enlivened their surfaces. Mystras, part of a pillar (top) and part of a cornice (bottom).

149. Section of marble revetment preserved in situ. Mystras, Hodegetria.

the glass to be set in the openings of buildings, had both a functional and decorative character. Because of technical limitations, their production consisted of relatively small pieces of glass, frequently coloured, which were attached by means of metal clamps and placed in a wooden, plaster or stone frame that was often given relief decoration (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 151-156). Sections of glass window panes have been found in Constantinople, Asia Minor and Greece (Henderson – Mundell Mango 1995, pp. 338, 343). Finds from excavations in the south church of the Pantokrator Monastery and the Chora Monastery in Constantinople attest to the use of stained-glass windows in the 12th century (Henderson – Mundell Mango 1995, pp. 346-356, Ousterhout 1999, p. 154). Glaziers probably also made the glass tesserae used in mosaics (Henderson – Mundell Mango 1995, pp. 338, 339).

Glass-workshops (Sodini 1979, pp. 92-94) were considered dangerous because of the kilns and were required by law to be established in isolated areas (Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, pp. 130-131). The life of St Photeine records that a fire started from a glass-workshop (Halkin 1989, pp. 122-124). Accidents were common, with glaziers having their eyes injured and losing their sight (Magoulias 1976, p. 23).

Amongst the contractors mentioned in the *Book of the Eparch* are the *gypsoplastai*, who worked with ready-made plaster (Koder 1991, p. 138). The material was prepared by *gypsopoioi* in workshops with kilns called *gypsaria* or *gypsokopeia*. The minimum distance separating these from houses was laid down by law (Tourptsoglou-Stephanidou 1998, pp. 128-129).

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150. Parts of the marble revetment of the Hodegetria, now incorporated in the floor of the Metropolis of Mystras.

151. Detail of the marble revetment with champlevé decoration. Mystras, Hodegetria.

Other craftsmen worked on the completion of a building whose work is apparent in the decorative details, such as the wax-and-mastic or coloured inlays in architectural sculptures.

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Architects – Engineers – Master-craftsmen – Contractors

In two edicts addressed to governors of the western provinces of the empire, Constantine the Great stresses the lack of sufficient architects to cope with the great needs of the empire, and suggests that the young should be encouraged to take up the study of architecture (Mango 1972, pp. 14-15, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 293).

In the early years, it was the architects who had more practical knowledge and technical expertise, while the engineers were the ones trained in theory and academically educated. They stood high in the social hierarchy, were greatly respected, and often enjoyed the favour of the palace (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 39-40, 43-44). The best-known architects of the Early Christian period were Anthemios of Tralles *a most learned man in the wisdom known as mechanics, and also another engineer with him*, Isidore of Miletos, to whom the emperor Justinian assigned supervision of the construction of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

After about the 7th century, the picture changed. Theoretical knowledge was no longer in demand, and greater importance was now placed on practical experience with the work team. In the literary sources, builders and master-craftsmen are now mentioned, though rarely by name in place of engineers and architects (Johnson 1991). Self-promotion of this kind was now confined to builders and donors, whose personality was thought to be reflected in the building (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 40-44).

In the case of imperial donations, the

role of the emperor is emphasised at the expense of that of the architect. The emperors dictated the design –the empress Eudoxia sent to St Porphyrios a letter containing a sketch of the church that she wished to build (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 301)– and, according to Prokopios, they also suggested solutions to structural problems (Ousterhout 1999, p. 40). Constantine IX Monomachos is said frequently to have visited the site on which the church of Hagios Georgios of Mangana was being built, bringing with him changes to the designs of the monument under construction (Renault 1926-28, vol. II, pp. 61-62).

In the case of ecclesiastical buildings divine intervention in the architect's task was of definitive importance, and architects became merely its instruments. St Martha appeared to a monk in a vision and told him she wished a church to be built, also revealing to him a detailed design for it. One of the monks of the monastery, Angoulas, was appointed architect for the project and changed the design of the church, but St Martha at once intervened and succeeded in having the church built according to her instructions (Magoulias 1976, p. 12, Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 307-309). In another case, St Symeon Stylites the Younger was shown the design for his monastery by an angel (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 309). The saints themselves were often builders, architects and contractors at the same time (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 42, 52, 53, 54).

In the Early Christian period architects, who had the necessary background in theory, followed the Roman practice and produced designs for the building under construction. The terms *skariphoi, indalmata* and *skiagraphia* found in the written sources, probably refer to such designs, or even to models of buildings (Moutsopoulos 1992, pp. 435, 436, 439-440). Plaster is also said to have been used by architects to mark out the position of a church on the work-site (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 301). With the transition to the Byzantine period proper, however, and the shift of emphasis from theoretical knowledge to practical experience acquired in a workshop, customs changed and Byzantine builders now relied on their experience (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 58-85). The design of the church of Hagia Photeine in Sparta was revealed in a dream to St Nikon, who then traced it directly on the ground, using a rope, a common practice for measuring land throughout the Middle Ages (Lampsidis 1982, p. 68). When they visited the work-site to instruct and supervise the craftsmen, architects carried a long, thin rod (Orlandos 1955, p. 338). Whenever he came to inspect the work on the erection of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Justinian wore *a white colobium and carried a slender rod in his hand*, according to George Kodinos (*PG* 157, 621).

Architects were invited to undertake specific projects. The architect Rufinus, for example, travelled from Antioch to Gaza in order to erect a church there (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, pp. 300-301).

A number of people such as contractors, middle-men, and foremen, intervened between the builder and the architect, their role being to settle the financial and non-structural matters that arose. According to the *Basilics, It is as though contractors who build with their own materials make them over to the owner of the land* (Scheltema 1956, p. 773). In the *Book of the Eparch* craftsmen are also regarded as contractors when they undertake the obligation to complete a job for an employer (Mentzou 1975, p. 188). In some cases, indeed, no clear distinction is drawn in the literary sources between an architect, a contractor and a builder, since the last might stand in place of the other two (Magoulias 1976, p. 13)

Contracts were signed between the contractor and the employer that were regarded as binding on both sides. Often, however, problems arose, contracts were infringed, deadlines were not met, and the state had to intervene through legislation. According to the *Book of the Eparch*, contractors that abandoned a job without good reason were taken before the eparch and punished by being beaten, shorn and sent into exile; they also had to return the fee they had received (Koder 1991, pp. 138-142).

The literary sources also included examples of exploitation by powerful contractors. Elpidios, a very wealthy architect of high social standing, undertook jobs for which he was paid in advance and which he then assigned to organised work-teams, while keeping the final supervision in his own hands; in this way, he made enormous profits (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 305).

In the case of major buildings financed by the emperors, state officials were appointed as supervisors and heads of work (Ousterhout 1999, pp. 46-49, 51). One such was the patrician John Patrikios, to whom the emperor Theophilos assigned supervision of the erection of the palace at Bryas on the Asian coast of the Bosporos (Moutsopoulos 1992, pp. 436-437).

The construction of an important ecclesiastical building might be supervised by a cleric. Constantine the Great put the



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152. Justinian, in the role of architect, directs the building of the church of Hagia Sophia. Manuscript (cod. Vat. Lat. 4939, fol. 28v). Italy, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

bishop of Jerusalem, Makarios, in charge of building the Holy Sepulchre, though Makarios was obliged to collaborate with two senior officials who carried out his orders (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1988, p. 300). The monk Rouchas was made responsible for rebuilding the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople after the recapture of the city from the Franks in 1261 (Ousterhout 1999, p. 48).

A. M.





153. A western medieval town, realistically rendered by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, on the eve of the Renaissance. Similar depictions were possibly seen by contemporary painters at Mystras. "The results of sound administration". Detail from a wall-painting (circa 1337-1340). Italy, Sienna, Palazzo Pubblico.

154. John VIII Palaiologos during his visit to the West in search of support against the Ottoman threat. Painting by Benozzo Gozolli. Second quarter of 15th c. Italy, Florence, Palazzo Medici Ricardi.

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Byzantium and the Medieval West

It is difficult for historians of the Middle Ages in the West to understand how the peoples of the West perceived the Byzantine world: an empire that was a continuation of the Roman empire, and its capital, Constantinople-New Rome, to which the emperor Constantine transferred the seat of government of the civilised world in the 4th century, and which remained the wealthiest, most beautiful and most densely inhabited city in Christendom until the 13th century.

Until the coronation of Charlemagne, the right of the Byzantine ruler to be regarded as the sole emperor and successor of the Roman emperors was never disputed by the West. The recapture of the western provinces by Justinian in the 6th century was looked upon as the recovery of old territories. The Pope of Rome, too, whose election was ratified by the emperor or his representative in the West, the exarch of Ravenna, continued to date his bulls and letters according to the year of the emperor's reign.

In the middle of the 8th century, however, when Rome was under threat from the Lombards, the popes set aside their religious differences with the iconoclast emperors and sought the assistance of the Isaurian emperor Leo III, who failed to respond to their call. Rome then turned to the Franks, whose king assumed the rather vague title of *patrician of the Romans*. After 772, the year of the emperor's reign is no longer found in papal documents, and in 800, Charlemagne was crowned emperor. The Byzantine ruler, however, persisted in regarding himself as the sole emperor and granted only the title of "king" to the western rulers. Down to the Fourth Crusade, the latter, despite being critical of Constantinople's claims, continued to be impressed deeply by the prestige and effulgence of the Byzantine court. At the same time, western monarchs showed great concern to enter into marriage ties with the Byzantine imperial family.

The lustre of the emperor was owed in large part to the grandeur of his capital. Eudes de Deuil described its size, beauty, wealth, and also filth, at the time of the Second Crusade, writing that it *transcended all limits* (Waquet 1949, IV, pp. 44-45). For Villehardouin, half a century later, Constantinople is the *queen of cities*, whose grandeur had to be seen to be appreciated (Faral 1938, p. 130, CXXVIII). Many pilgrims visited Constantinople on their way to the Holy Land, attracted by the astonishing collections of holy relics in the city. All those who have left a description of their journey speak with awe and reverence of the great City, which they regarded as equal in holiness to papal Rome. Towards the end of the 12th century, when relations between Greeks and Franks had been broken off, western travellers express their sorrow that so many precious objects were in the hands of the Greeks (Riaut 1875, pp. 1-14).

A few emissaries, including Liutprand of Cremona or William of Tyre, compiled reports of their missions, though we know that not a year passed without some embassy from the west arriving at the Bosporos. The city was already full of merchants coming and going. From the 8th century onwards, so many merchants were visiting Constantinople that two centuries later they lived in a flourishing neighbourhood and monopolised a significant part of the export trade.

In the opposite direction, many Byzantines went on pilgrimage to Rome: in 1080, there were so many of them there that Robert Guiscard had no difficulty in finding an impostor to impersonate the deposed emperor Michael VIII. Other Greeks had a better reputation, however: like the young man Nicholas (Nikolaos), who was born in the Peloponnese, crossed the Adriatic when he was seventeen, and died in 1094 at Trani, to be proclaimed a saint by the Pope four years later; or Symeon of Syracuse, at the same period, who grew up in Constantinople, was a guide in Jerusalem, retreated as a hermit to Mount Sinai, whom we later find living in Normandy and later in Verdun, and who probably died at Trèves. There were Greek religious communities in Lorraine and Provence. At the time of the German ruler Otto II and his Greek wife Theophano, Germany welcomed travelling monks, many of whom seem to have been craftsmen (Muntz 1893, pp. 183ff.).

Greek merchants have left behind very little written evidence.

155. Christ crowning Roger II. Mosaic. 1143. Italy, Palermo, Palatine chapel.

Writing was little practised in their social environment and their stories held no interest for the pious readers of the period. Moreover, Greek merchants did not travel widely, since they were discouraged from doing so by the imperial government; they preferred to keep control of the valuable goods produced in Byzantium and encourage foreigners to search its markets, even for less valuable merchandise. Nonetheless, Byzantine merchant ships are known to have sailed outside imperial waters, like the one that took on board Otto II, who had just been defeated by the Arabs near Stilo in Calabria, or those that broke the Turkish blockade during the final siege of Constantinople (Runciman 1952, pp. 96-97, 102-103).

Byzantine craftsmen, too, travelled outside the empire, to Baghdad, for example, and also to Germany, in the late 10th and early 11th century. Greek monks built the chapel of St Bartholomew in the cathedral of Padirborn; shortly after this, there were so many of them in the see of Hildesheim that the bishop forbade them to stay more than two days in any of his charity institutions. Some of these craftsmen did not travel of their own free will: silk-workers, for example, were abducted by Roger II from Corinth and Thebes in 1147 and sent to his court at Palermo (Chalandon 1907, p. 136).

The Italian merchants trading within the empire rapidly became so numerous and so prosperous it proved impossible for them to enjoy good relations with the peoples they exploited so successfully. Indeed, their arrogance was one of the main reasons for the Byzantine rancour towards the West.

Cultural exchanges could have been more fruitful, but Westerners had little to offer to Byzantine scientific thought and Byzantine scholars rarely travelled to the West. Charlemagne employed a Byzantine tutor, Elissaios, to teach Greek to his daughter Rothrude, who was betrothed to Constantine VI, though his lessons at Aix-la-Chapelle were not very successful (De Boor 1883-85, vol. I, p. 455). Otto III learned a little Greek from his Greek mother and his Greek-Italian tutor (Schramm 1929, p. 101), and Roger Bacon confirms that there was always a large number of Greek students in the West (Brewer 1859, pp. 32-34). However, those interested in ancient Greek often preferred the Arabic translations made in Spain.

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156. Building of the tower of Babel. Mosaic 13th c.
Italy, Venice, San Marco.

South Italy and Sicily formed an area intermediate between the West and the Byzantine empire. For a long time, even after the Norman occupation, many of the inhabitants of these areas spoke Greek and maintained relations with Constantinople. Venice, too, which had a Greek community and also kept Byzantine traditions alive, served as a close link between Byzantium and the West. One of the positive consequences of the Fourth Crusade was that it resulted in many Westerners settling on Byzantine territories and becoming acquainted with the culture of these areas. At a time when the Italian Renaissance was appearing on the horizon, Italian men of learning realised that Byzantium had something to teach them. Petrarch and Jean de Salisbury, were not very successful in their efforts to learn Greek, but at least they tried. The main thing that brought Italy into contact with the rich intellectual life of Byzantium at the beginning of the 15th century was the participation of Greek scholars in the Council of Florence. As for the Byzantines, they discovered that they could make a brilliant career for themselves in Italy –we need only recall Manuel Chrysoloras and Cardinal Bessarion.

The restoration of Byzantine authority in south Italy in the 9th century exercised considerable influence on the history of the region. When the Normans settled in this wealthy province two centuries later they widely copied the Byzantine administration system and were receptive to the cultural influence of their predecessors. In the mosaics of the church of Martorana in Palermo, Roger II receives his crown from Christ, in accordance with the Byzantine model. Greek political and cultural models penetrated even Rome, though mainly Venice (administrative titles, ceremonial and etiquette, art, etc.) and, to a lesser extent, the other coastal cities of Italy.

Western Europe owed a great debt to the fortifications of Constantinople. In protecting their empire, which they identified with the Christian world, the Byzantines in practice blocked the path of many invaders, such as the Arabs in the 7th century, and preserved ancient Greek culture. What would we know of the ancient Greek authors without the copies bequeathed to us by medieval scribes?

The sphere in which Byzantium offered its finest gifts to the West was undoubtedly that of art. Early Christian art was pro-

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157. Byzantine church with five domes. Italy, Calabria, Stilo.

duced mainly in Syria and Antioch, but with the reign of Justinian I Constantinople became the centre of Byzantine artistic output. The areas influenced by it extended outside the borders of the empire. Venetian art was in essence Byzantine until the end of the 12th century. The architecture of the cathedral of San Marco was a clumsy copy of the Hagioi Apostoloi, built in Constantinople at the time of Justinian. The earliest mosaics of San Marco, like those on the neighbouring island of Torcello, have a Byzantine air so authentic that we might be tempted to attribute them to Byzantine artists. It is not until the end of the 12th century that the mosaics of San Marco begin to reveal a kind of western naturalism. After this, Venice developed its own style, an amalgam of Byzantine and Gothic elements (Demus 1948, pp. 67-73).

Greek immigrants exercise so great an influence in 8th century Rome that one century later mosaics continued to be made in a Greek style –though one that was already old-fashioned in Constantinople. Greek influence was renewed at the beginning of the 10th century, when everything Byzantine became so fashionable that Roman aristocrats gave their children Greek names. It receded when the city fell into the hands of the German emperors and the popes of France and Lorraine.

The Norman kingdom of Sicily is well-known for its eclecticism in the spheres of art, culture and administration. In art, Byzantium was at first predominant. The Martorana, the first large church to be built in Palermo, by the Greek official George of Antioch, was constructed in a purely Byzantine style, and its mosaics reflect the imperial art of Constantinople. The same craftsmen worked on the cathedrals of Cefalù and Monreale, and on the Palatine Chapel of King Roger, and at the same time taught their craft to Sicilian mosaicists. The latest mosaics of Monreale bear the stamp of a Sicilian workshop and attest to the decline of the authentic Byzantine style. The architecture of these churches is essentially western, in contrast with that of the Martorana (Demus 1950, pp. 3-148).

Very few structures are known that can be attributed with certainty to Greek craftsmen working in Germany. German architecture strongly recalls that of medieval Armenia, and it might be supposed that the Greek monks who worked in Germany were in fact Armenians (Der Nersessian 1947).

The indirect influence of Byzantine art on the West was widespread. Anglo-Saxon art reveals Mediterranean affinities, most probably with Italy, which formed the connecting link with the East (Talbot-Rice 1952, pp. 28ff.). Carolingian art was strongly marked by the conquest of Italy, and in particular by contact with Ravenna. The cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle was rebuilt on the model of San Vitale. The domed churches of south-west France borrowed their Byzantine elements from the monuments of northern Italy and Venice, and only indirectly from Constantinople. In wall-painting and the minor arts, France and England of the middle of the 12th century saw a significant return to the Byzantine style, visible in works like the Winchester Bible, in which Byzantine influence is clear –undoubtedly owed to the close contacts maintained with the Normans of Sicily by Normandy and Norman England (Oakeshott 1945, pp. 10-16).

When the Gothic style became predominant in the West, Byzantine influence declined, except possibly in the sphere of painting. Though it may be too bold to speculate on the degree to which the painters of the early Renaissance were influenced by the great revival of Byzantine painting in the 13th century, there was undeniably some connection between the two phenomena. However, the final, and most brilliant Byzantine contribution to the development of European painting dates from after the fall of Constantinople.

Eastern Europe owes its entire Christian culture to the Byzantine empire. Whether the tradition that Boris espoused Christianity after seeing a dramatic depiction of Hell by a Byzantine artist is true or not, it is certain that when the Bulgarians adopted Byzantine Christianity, they acquired art along with religion. Churches had to be built and decorated, and the art of the first Bulgarian empire is purely Byzantine. During the second empire, the craftsmen were native Bulgarians and a number of local features made their appearance in art, especially in painting (Grabar 1928).

There was considerable artistic output in Serbia from the 13th century onwards. Ecclesiastical architecture followed the Byzantine tradition, though a tendency to raise the height of the monuments soon manifested itself, carrying to extremes a feature evident in Byzantine architecture in the 12th century. With the exception of the early wall-paintings of Ochrid, the work of Greek painters at the time of the Bulgarian occupa-



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tion in the early 11th century, Serbian painting is descended from the wall-paintings at Nerezi, near Skopje, executed by a Greek painter about 1164 at the orders of a ruler of the Komnenos dynasty. These paintings, the most characteristic feature of which is their astonishing humanity, seem to have exercised enormous influence on the Serb painters of the following century, who also maintained their contacts with the schools of Thessalonike (Grabar 1953, pp. 139-152).

Byzantium was also the foundation on which the art of Christian Russia was supported. The cathedral of Saint Sophia at Kiev, built and decorated by Byzantines, served as a model for architecture and decoration over the following centuries. The flowering of Russian icon-painting began at the beginning of the 13th century, with the arrival in Russia of the icon later known as the Vladimir Virgin. The Russians swiftly developed their own style, however, and Byzantine Classicism declined in favour of a greater decorative freedom, while the spherical Byzantine dome became onion-shaped. While Byzantine art was returning to a more naturalistic style, Russian painters were giving expression to an emotionality found in schools in the Byzantine provinces, such as Cappadocia, though these were far removed from the imperial style of Constantinople.

Byzantine thought did not extend far outside Byzantium, since it could not easily be comprehended outside the bounds of the empire. Philosophers and theologians remained unknown. Moslems respected Greek mathematicians and doctors, but Westerners borrowed their mathematics and medicine from the Arabs. The last Greek theologian to be known in the West was John of Damascus (†750). Indeed, Greek theology had a tendency to mysticism that was completely foreign to the West. The last Greek mystic to exercise some influence on Westerners was Pseudo-Areopagites, who probably lived towards the end of the 5th century. The Byzantine Platonist philosopher Michael Psellos remained unknown outside the circle of scholars in Constantinople. It was not until the 15th century that a few Platonist intellectuals, following the example of George Gemistos Plethon, exercised some influence on the West. This was felt at the Council of Ferrara-

Florence (1438-1439), which was attended by outstanding men of learning in the retinue of John VIII Palaiologos and the bishop of Nicaea, Bessarion: George Scholarios from Constantinople, George Amiroutzes from Trebizond, and the writer John Argyropoulos, who accompanied Plethon from Mystras. On 6 July 1439, the unification of the churches was proclaimed by Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini and Bessarion, in Latin and Greek. The theological negotiations were tough, but the benefits deriving from the meeting were not confined to the achievement of an agreement on doctrine: this important council was the culminating moment in the process of the transference to Italy of the heritage of Greek thought (Garin 1976, p. 75).

Hated by the monks, but enjoying the emperor's esteem, Plethon received from Manuel II Palaiologos the large region of Mystras, and after 1433 used this new Sparta as an arena in which to develop the Greek Platonic thought that he desired to rehabilitate. He wrote to the emperor *We whom you rule and govern are therefore Greeks by race, as our speech and ancestral education and culture bear witness* (Hersant 1999, pp. 123-130). Plethon dreamed of a renaissance of ancient Greece in the Peloponnese. He was understood neither by the Greeks nor by the Latins.

At Florence, Byzantium bowed to the will of Rome, but the decisions taken there bore no fruit and Plethon's pupil, Bessarion, the leader of the union party, embraced Catholicism, became a cardinal of the Church of Rome, and was made director of an academy in Rome at which ancient Greek texts were translated into Latin.

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158. The emperor Justinian and his retinue. Mosaic. 540-547. Italy, Ravenna, San Vitale.

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Byzantium and the West: the experience of the Late Byzantine urban centre of Mystras



Byzantium, the eastern part of the Roman empire, whose centre was Rome in the West until the capital was transferred to Constantinople in the 4th century, traditionally enjoyed close political, religious and economic relations with parts of what is now called Western Europe.
After the 6th century, however, during which the West was being shaped under the effects of the barbarian invasions, the Byzantine empire appeared to turn to the East, where its major foe was at first the Persians and later the Arabs. For centuries, the Byzantines had dealings with these peoples in the form both of political and commercial contacts and of military conflict. The results of, and witnesses to, this relationship are the reciprocal influences evident in a number of spheres.
This situation changed perceptibly with the Crusades, particularly after 1204, a period when the states of Western Europe had grown strong and had acquired a separate political existence and economic superiority, and could boast notable some achievements in the sphere of technical expertise. They even expanded to the East, to the Holy Land, and to former territories of the Byzantine empire. Byzantium, now with very restricted territory even after the recapture of the capital in 1261, was encircled by small states organised on the Western European model and ruled by Latins. Contact between the two worlds, which had earlier inspired amazement and admiration in the westerners, with

Byzantium, the head of the then known world, taking the lead and decanting its civilisation and culture, now became a reciprocal process. At this same period, the balance and traditional status quo was disturbed on the eastern borders of the empire, as a result of the expansion of the Turks –initially the Seljuks, and later the Ottomans. The insecurity they felt at this situation in the East induced the Byzantines to seek support in the Christian West, with which they had already come into contact and had created channels of communication.

The Latin states of the East, too, which were also faced with the danger from Islam, had recourse to alliances with Byzantium, another circumstance that brought the two worlds together.

The reorientation of the Byzantine empire to the west, which can be seen in many fields, in art, aesthetics, and also in everyday life, is attested mainly after the middle of the 13th century. However, the concomitant changes to Byzantine territory and the coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups, resulting in frequent intermarriage, did not alter the preeminently Greek character of these regions. The Greek population became conscious of some elements in their own national character and Hellenism acquired cohesion.

In addition to the foundation of Latin states on the territories of the empire, there were other factors helping to acquaint the two worlds of Byzantium and medieval Europe with each other. Mention



may be made first of the intense activities of Westerners in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly the Italian cities of Venice, Ragusa, Genoa, and others, who had at an early date secured privileges, which steadily increased, from the Byzantine emperors. The creation of important commercial harbours and trading stations on Byzantine territory, such as Methone, Korone and Candia, subject to the Serenissima Repubblica of Venice, or Patras, Glarentza and Famagusta, under Frankish control, was accompanied by the settlement of Latins at these places, most of them merchants and bankers, who were assimilated into the social fabric. Through trade, industrial products from the West, like pottery, textiles, weapons and a range of luxury goods, also reached the territories of the empire, as, naturally, did new ideas.

Another important factor bringing the two worlds together was the desire of some of the emperors of the last dynasty to achieve a political and religious rapprochement with the West, which they saw as the only hope of salvation from the Ottoman threat. The first Byzantine emperor to visit a foreign capital, Buda in Hungary, in search of allies against the Turks, was John V Palaiologos, in 1366 (Norwich 1999, p. 439 and Laïou 1980, p. 175). Another bold, indeed, at its time pioneering, foreign policy initiative was taken by Manuel II Palaiologos who, showing great perspicuity, turned to the western world, since he understood the common religious and cultural ties binding them

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159-160. Theodore Doukas Synadenos (l.) and Eudocia Doukaina Komnene Synadene (r.). Detail of a miniature. Typikon of the Bebaias Elpidos (Sure Hope) Monastery in Constantinople, (cod. Gr. 35, fol. 8r). 14th c. England, Oxford, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

together. Though there was no tangible response to his requests, the contact of the emperor, his counsellors and his attendants with the European historical process, during his long tour of the courts of the Western European rulers, Venice, Milan, Paris and London, from 1399-1403, contributed to the assimilation of a variety of cultural elements. At the same time, documents preserved at the courts of the Western rulers reveal the effect created by Manuel's strong, intellectually and morally attractive character (Zachariadou 1980, pp. 194-196 and Norwich 1999, pp. 463-480, Barker 1969, pp. 165-199). The emperor John VIII Palaiologos also made a dynamic appearance in Italy in 1438/9 in Florence, the wealthy city of the Medici. Accompanied by a large group of officials, clerics and philosophers, amongst whom were Plethon and his pupil Bessarion, the emperor pushed forward the negotiations for and signing of the Unification of the Churches (Norwich 1999, pp. 522-529).

The need for a rapprochement with the West was perceived by many of the most important men of learning in the Late Byzantine period, such as Demetrios Kydones (14th c.), Plethon (15th c.) and Bessarion (15th c.), who called for a return to the ancient Greek tradition and greater contacts with the West.

Mystras, was one of the most flourishing urban centres of the empire during this last period of its life, had strong links with Constantinople and

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enjoyed proximity to the Frankish states of the Peloponnese, and also to Italy. It is thus an excellent area in which to trace this turn, or rather rapprochement, between Byzantium and the medieval West just before the dawn of the Renaissance, and in which to investigate the contribution made to this process by Byzantium. The exhibition in the Mystras Museum attempts to shed light on this subject in a tangible way, through the material remains of the past, concentrating on three axes, for which we possess a good quantity of evidence:
– The rapprochement between Byzantium and the medieval West in matters of everyday life, such as dress and clothing,
– The influence of western art on the artistic output of the despotate, and
– Intellectual figures such as Bessarion, who lived, even if only for a short period, in the town of Mystras, and whose work made an active contribution to the miracle of the Renaissance. Alongside these three subjects, we shall have occasion to refer to the presence of westerners in the capital of the despotate of the Morea. Despite its assimilation of foreign elements, Mystras continued to be one of the most dynamic contributors to the continuation and renewal of the Byzantine tradition, as is evident both from the artistic output of the despotate and from its institutions and social organisation. Western influences were incorporated and normally successfully assimilated into a tight cultural fabric of a patently Byzantine character, thus confirming the ability of the Byzantine world to assimilate in this way even at its final hour.

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161. Funeral portrait of an official and his wife. The woman is dressed in western fashion, and the green garment worn by the man would have been appropriate for a protovestiarios. Second half of the 14th c. Mystras, Brondocheion Monastery, Hodegetria.

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THE DRESS WORN BY THE INHABITANTS OF MYSTRAS

162. Funeral portrait of the skouterios Kaniotes and his wife. Second half of the 14th c. Mystras, Brondocheion Monastery, Hodegetria.

163. Skouterios Kaniotes. Detail of the picture no. 162.

Dress, a fundamental feature of everyday life in any human community, is a mirror of its cultural identity.

In the society of Mystras, significant numbers of the aristocracy, of the financially well-to-do in general, and also of cultured individuals, maintained close relations with the capital of the empire, Constantinople, and these would naturally have carried on the Byzantine tradition in the sphere of fashion and followed the developments in dress that took place at the same period at the imperial court of the Palaiologoi.

A wealth of information on the dress worn by the officials of the period is contained in a text written by Pseudo-Kodinos in the 14th century (Verpeaux 1966, Piltz 1994). Our picture of the costume worn by the upper strata of society is supplemented by portraits of officials in mural paintings, illuminated manuscripts, icons, and other works of art.

The main garment worn by men at this period may be considered to be the full-length, fairly tight-fitting tunic, with a plain neckline and long, close fitting sleeves, which was buttoned down the full length of the front, normally with spherical buttons (Spatharakis 1981, fig. 144, Piltz 1994, p. 154, fig. 55, Bank 1978, fig. 245, 246, and many other examples). A tunic of this type is worn by the skouterios Kaniotes depicted in the Hodegetria at Mystras and also by the donors of Hagia Paraskeue at Geraki (Kalamara 2000, pp. 106, 111, 114, pl. XIII. 33). Another male garment

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164. Portrait of two donors, man and wife. Their clothes are within the Byzantine tradition. Second half of the 14th c. Mystras, Peribleptos.

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depicted at Mystras is associated with particular officials by Pseudo-Kodinos. Its characteristic features are the long narrow sleeves, which are not worn, but allowed to hang freely behind the arms and tied on the back or secured in the sash. This garment, which was very common in the Late Byzantine period (Cvetković 1995, p. 155), called lapatza, *is worn by the notable depicted in the church of the Hagioi Theodoroi between the archangel and St John (Etzeoglou 1982, p. 515, fig. 10). Details of the dress worn at Mystras, as depicted in the wall-paintings, are also consistent with the Byzantine tradition and the prescriptions of Pseudo-Kodinos. We may note, by way of example, the custom of hanging a kerchief in the sash, or tying one round the waist, and also the wearing of hats, such as the* skaranikon *worn by Kaniotes in the Hodegetria or the* skiadion *of Manuel Laskaris Chatzikes in the Pantanassa (Etzeoglou 1982, pp. 516, 518, fig. 12, 18). Hats were a basic component of both the male and the female wardrobe of the Byzantine upper classes from as early as the 11th century (Kalamara 1995, pp. 35, 36).*

The various dress accessories found during excavations on the archaeological site provide support for the view that the Byzantine dress tradition continued to flourish. The parts of shoes discovered, particularly the soles found in the female burial at Hagia Sophia, and the protective metal tips, have a different form and technical characteristics from those found in medieval western Europe at the same period (Volken 2000, pp. 99-102, and entries no. 4-6). Jewellery, too, and other valuable dress elements, such as spherical metal buttons (entries no. 8, 9), or the ornaments that were probably suspended from prependulia *(entry no. 22, and probably also no. 23) follow the Byzantine tradition in their shape, decoration and technique. Some of these accessories, moreover, were probably made in the despotate, as is suggested by the button-mould no. 11, found in the castle.*

On the other hand a knowledge of the current fashion of the same period in the Western states and also in the Latin possessions on the former territories of the Byzantine empire (Mylopotamitaki 1986, pp. 47-51, Christophoraki 1999, pp. 13-19, Bitha 2000, pp. 442, 443) is attested by some of the archaeological finds connected with the female wardrobe, and by portraits of women in the wall-paintings at Mystras. The costume of the young woman found in a tomb at the church of Hagia Sophia (entries no. 1-4), which consists of two overlying tunics, the outer of which is sleeveless and fits fairly tightly on the breast, reflects dress preferences similar to those of the women of the aristocracies of Italy, France, and other western European countries at the same period. The trend to tight-fitting garments that showed off the female body can be seen in the West from the early 14th century, and was accompanied by considerable affectation in the wearing of sleeves, which were often not permanently stitched to the garment but fastened to it as occasion demanded (Aubry 1998, pp. 19, 20). The fashion of garments that fitted closely to the body spread immediately to the Frankish possessions in the eastern Mediterranean, and many examples are known from areas

such as Cyprus, Crete and Rhodes. At Mystras, the western fashion of the period is followed by the dress of a woman, possibly the wife of a protovestiarios, *whose portrait is painted in a funeral chapel in the Hodegetria (Etzeoglou 1982, p. 517, fig. 16); she wears a red dress that fits tight to the bust and has a deep, almost square neckline. Several of the portraits of women in churches in the despotate of the Morea, however, are connected rather with traditional dress models. The basic type of female costume, which dominated the wardrobe of the imperial court and was very widely disseminated in the former territories of the empire, the wide dress with an overfall at the waist and long, very wide triangular sleeves (Papantoniou 2000, pp. 118-127, fig. 143, 146-150), is not found in artistic representations at Mystras. The spirit of these garments, however, can be seen in the dress worn by the wife of the* skouterios *Kaniotes, also depicted in the chapel just mentioned, which conceals the female body thanks to its width. The garments of the female donors of the Peribleptos and Hai-Giannaki at Mystras, and those of Hagia Paraskeue at Geraki, are also to be assigned to the traditional Byzantine female wardrobe.*

Fashion at Mystras, then, reflected the rapprochement between Byzantium and the medieval western world, a phenomenon that can also be observed –often with greater intensity– throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean and the Balkan states. In the case of the despotate, this cultural osmosis is apparent in the wardrobe, particularly that of women: possibly because the women of the aristocracy were not bound by the etiquette of the court in the same way as men, for whom dress was also a means of declaring their office and status. It may also have been due in part to the fact that western dress habits originally came to Mystras along with the western aristocratic wives of despots, such as Theodora Tocco or Cleopa Malatesta, and their retinues. There is no indication, however, that these western-style clothes were worn by any specific ethnic group. On the contrary, experience from other regions, which were former territories of the Byzantine empire, indicates that they were widely worn by different social groups, irrespective of ethnic origin or religion.

The remains of garments found in the excavations in Hagia Sophia bear witness, too, to the commercial relations between the despotate of the Morea and the West. They also confirm relevant information from the writings of Bessarion and Plethon, who note the lack of technical expertise in the sphere of weaving and are critical of imports of luxury goods and raw materials such as silk, wool and linen, which were also produced in the Peloponnese (Lambros 1930, vol. III, pp. 255, 263, vol. IV, pp. 43, 44). In fact, the fabric of both the inner and outer garments found in the female burial mentioned above exhibits similarities of decoration with Spanish and Italian textiles that have been preserved to the present day. These were probably products of Spanish and Italian origin respectively that came to Mystras through commercial exchanges (Martiniani-Reber 2000, pp. 87-93). At this same period, another important production centre of precious silk

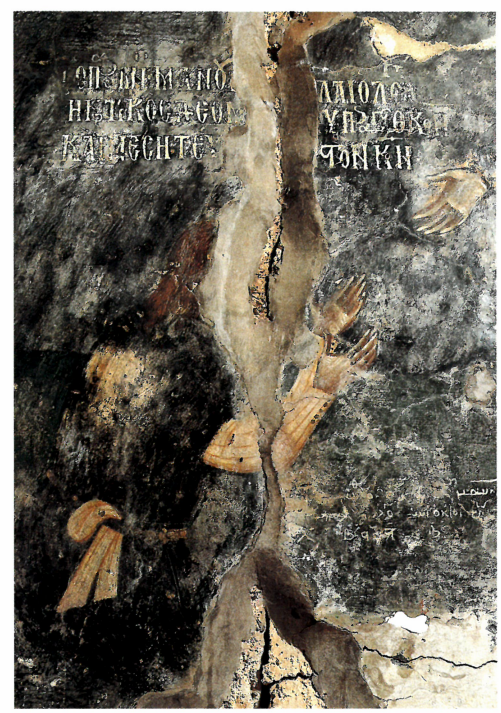
165. Portrait, probably of a donor. His garment, the lapatza, was widely worn in the Byzantine empire and the Balkans. circa 1400. Mystras, Brondocheion Monastery, Hagioi Theodoroi.

166. Funeral portrait of Manuel Palaiologos. His garment is within the Byzantine tradition. Early 15th c. Mystras, Brondocheion Monastery, Hagioi Theodoroi.

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and woollen fabrics that exported its products was Frankish-ruled Cyprus, according to the literary sources (Heyd 1886, vol. II, p. 10), which maintained wide-ranging relations with the despotate. However, the fact that no Cypriot textiles of the period have survived precludes any comparison with textiles from Mystras, and no safe conclusions may therefore be drawn.

Byzantine contact with the West during the Palaiologan period can thus be discerned, albeit to a limited extent, in matters relating to the everyday life of the inhabitants of Mystras, one of the last centres of the Byzantine empire.

P. K.

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ΙΙ.Κ.

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167. Family of donors wearing clothes that reflect both the Byzantine tradition and the influence of western fashion. 14th c. Crete, Kritsa, Panagia Kera.

168. Miniature from the Book of Job (cod. Par. Gr. 135, fol. 19). 1362. France, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

169. Man and wife who were high-ranking Byzantine officials: Michael Komnenos Laskaris Bryennios Kantakouzenos and Anna Kantakouzene Komnene Palaiologina Bryenissa. Miniature from the Tyikon of the Bebaias Elpidos Monastery (cod. Gr. 35, fol. 4). 14th c. England, Oxford, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

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1 Female dress

First half of the 15th century

Silk for the basic fabric, wool or cellulose fibres for the inner lining of the dress

0.89×0.47 m. (greatest dimensions of the piece that seems to be continuous)

Hagia Sophia, north portico, underground tomb, third from the east in the second row (tomb 5)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1746, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

The dress was discovered in 1955 during an excavation around the church of Hagia Sophia in a vaulted tomb with interior dimensions of 1.17×2.04×0.80 m. It belonged to a young woman, according to analyses carried out on the bone and dental remains of the body. This particular tomb contained a total of 12 interments and the young woman was the last to be buried in it. The surviving evidence suggests that her costume included two dresses, worn one above the other, a band to restrain and adorn her hair, and leather shoes. The general features of the costume and the fact that the woman was buried in the palace church also indicate that she was a member of the Mystras aristocracy.
The dress described here was an outer garment. A large part of the back and the top part of the front, at the breast, has survived. It is possible largely to restore its original form on the basis of the preserved elements, particularly the parts with a turned hem and the stitching between the individual pieces of fabric of which it was made. It is a full-length, sleeveless dress that will have flared out beneath the breast, with a close-fitting top and with a deep V-shaped neckline. It was probably fastened at the front underneath the neckline by means of cross-laces that pulled it tight. It would also have been girt beneath the bosom by a broad belt made of the same fabric (this, at least, is the probable interpretation of a few remains of material that cannot be assigned to the dress itself). This outer garment is made of pure silk monochrome damask decorated with an elaborate woven floral design. This is developed in wavy bands, alternately narrow and wide, and its central feature consists of lobed medallions with palmleaves and pointed panels. The pattern unit, which is repeated to fill the entire fabric, is quite large –48.5 cm. high and 17.5 cm. wide– though some textiles preserved from the same period, mostly velvet, have much larger pattern units. The complexity of the design and the type of weave used suggest that the silk was manufactured on a drawloom –that is, one with special equipment that enables complicated patterns to be repeated during the weaving of the textile. It was a forerunner of the modern jaquard loom. It is notable that the dress was lined on the inside with a tabby, probably of wool or cellulose fibres, such as linen (with the exception of cotton) and that it was additionally lined with a layer of carded silk placed between the two fabrics. This kind of lining made the delicate silk textile more durable and stronger, which was essential if it was to be used for tight-fitting dresses; it also increased its thermal qualities.
Both the fabric and the dress-pattern of the garment worn by the young noblewoman attest to strong contacts with the West just before the dissolution of the Byzantine empire by the Turks. Although no precise parallels have been identified for the Mystras textile, the individual decorative elements assign it to the iconographic vocabulary of the Italian and Spanish Renaissance. The composition of these elements, however, is closely related to that of Venetian textiles, particularly velvet. According to George Gemistos Plethon and his pupil Cardinal Bessarion, who lived in Mystras and were contemporaries of the young woman, the Byzantines no longer had the appropriate technology and were obliged to import manufactured products, and it is therefore likely that the silk damask came from the West. There was in fact an important centre producing silk and woollen textiles in the eastern Mediterranean (Heyd 1886, vol. II, pp. 8-10, 699, 670, 703-705), according to the literary sources of the period, but none of its products have survived to permit comparison: the centre in question was the Frankish-ruled island of Lusignan Cyprus, with which the despotate of the Morea maintained close contacts.
The form of the dress, too, reflects the fashion trends of the West, which, after the Crusades, had gradually spread also to the East, both to the former territories of the Byzantine empire on which small Latin states had been founded, and, as the find from Mystras demonstrates, to the last bastions of Byzantium. Some of the characteristic features of this fashion that are found in the Mystras dress are: garments fitting tight at the breast, which display the female body, a low neckline, and the absence of permanently attached sleeves, which were added at the last minute, depending on the occasion. This specific fashion was adopted by persons enjoying a certain financial ease, who belonged to the upper classes. However, it cannot be associated with any specific ethnic or religious group.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 11, 12. Id. 2000, pp. 27. Fiette 2000, pp. 37-39, 43, 44. Flury – Schweizer 2000, pp. 57, 75. Kalamara 2000, p. 105-107. Kalamara – Valansot 2000, pp. 121, 127. Kramar 2000, pp. 31-32. Martiniani-Reber 2000, pp. 87-89, 92, 93. Walton-Rogers 2000, p. 85.

P.K.

2 Female dress (chemise)

First half of the 15th century

Silk

Greatest dimensions of the part that appears to be continuous 0.70×0.59 m. (back of dress), 0.38×0.25 m. and 0.39×0.22 m. (front of dress)

Hagia Sophia, north portico, underground tomb, third from the east of the second row (tomb 5)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1745, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities



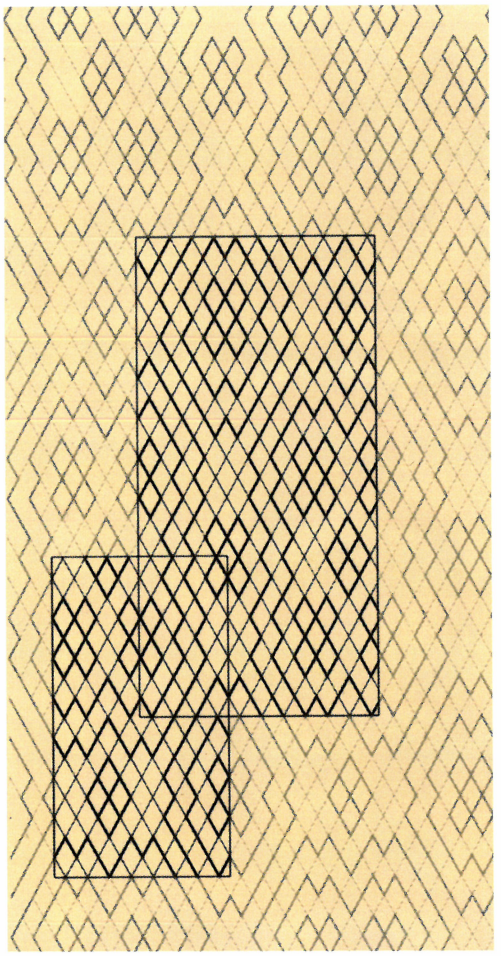


Drawing of the pieces making up the dress and the design adorning the silk fabric (drawing: Alexandre Fiette).

This is another full-length garment that the young noblewoman wore beneath dress no. 1. It was worn as a chemise, that is. Although only fragments of this inner garment are preserved, its general form can be reconstituted on the basis of a few large pieces and a number of technical features, such as the selvages and the stitching, and also the pattern of the fabric. It appears to have had a simple, T-shaped cut, with wide, cylindrical sleeves that continued a centuries-long tailoring tradition going back to Late Roman times. There is no evidence, however, for the neckline, or the cut of the bust. The dress was made of two, monochrome –probably undyed– pure silk fabrics decorated during weaving with slightly different patterns. One was used for the sleeves, shoulders and breast and was worn with the weft-side out. The selvage is preserved at the back, where this piece was stitched to the other fabric. It was decorated during weaving with alternating rows of large double lozenges with "broken" corners, and small plain lozenges, also with "broken" corners. The lozenges, and the spaces between them are filled with small X-motifs. The pattern unit, repeated over the entire fabric, may be considered small: 8 cm. along the warp and 4.5 cm. along the weft. The second piece of fabric was used for the front and back of the tunic beneath the breast, and was worn warp side out. In the pieces used for the front of the garment, a large part of the vertical selvage is preserved. The deterioration of the material at the centre of the front



Schematic rendering of the decoration of the inner tunic (drawing: Alexandre Fiette).



part makes it impossible to draw any conclusions as to the width of the dress. This fabric is decorated with plain lozenges with "broken" corners and X-motifs inside them. The pattern unit, repeated over the entire fabric, is very small: 2.5×2.5 cm. The difference in design of the two fabrics may be accounted for by the fact that the first, with the more complex pattern, could be seen, since the outer dress was sleeveless and had a deep neckline that revealed the breast. Aesthetic considerations also dictated the way in which the two fabrics were used, with the weft side visible in

one case and the warp side in the other: through this device, all the threads floats had the same orientation and were everywhere parallel with the vertical axis of the tunic.
These two silk fabrics were probably woven on a drawloom, though the small pattern unit could also have been produced on simpler looms –though in this case greater trouble would have to be taken. In any case, they were luxury fabrics, the production costs of which were very high and beyond the reach of household production. The decoration has similarities with Spanish textiles, suggesting that these were Spanish fabrics that came to the eastern Mediterranean through commercial exchanges.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 11, 12. Id. 2000, pp. 27. Fiette 2000, pp. 38-39, 42. Flury – Schweizer 2000, p. 57. Kalamara 2000, pp. 105-107. Kalamara – Valansot 2000, pp. 120, 121. Kramar 2000, pp. 31-32. Martiniani-Reber 2000, pp. 87, 91.

P.K.

3 Female coiffure

First half of the 15th century

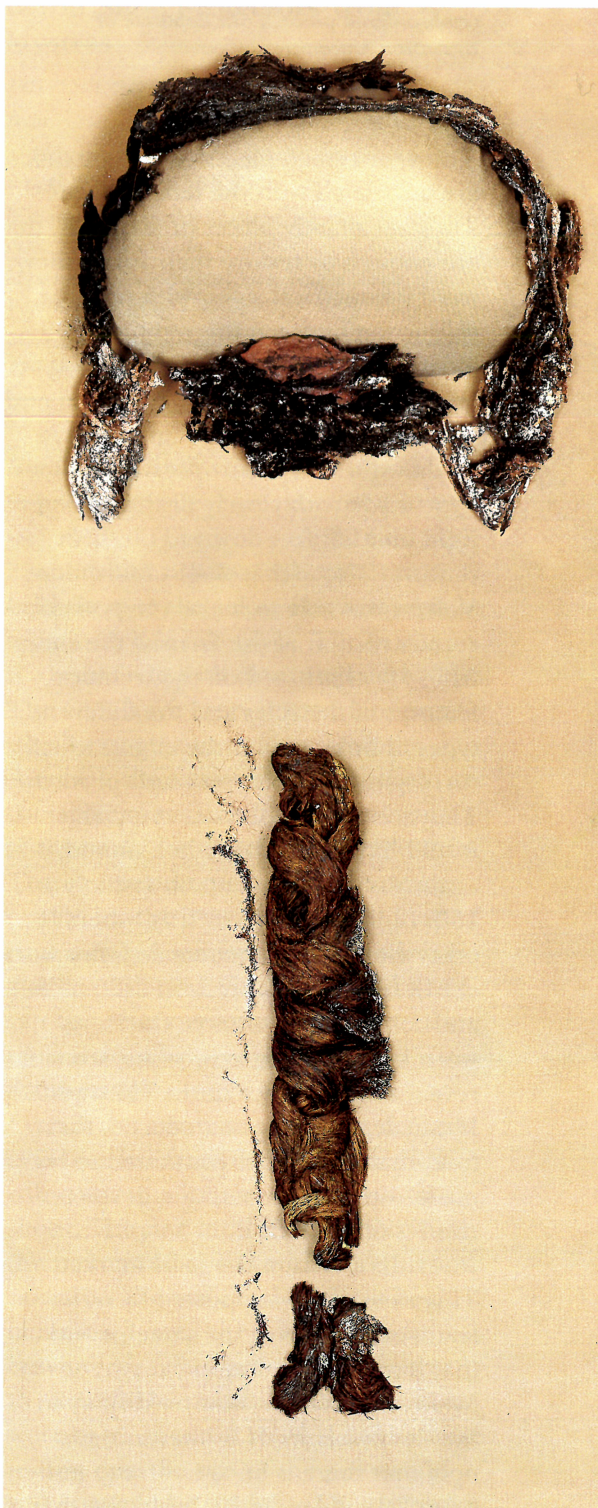
Hagia Sophia, north portico, underground tomb, third from the east in the second row of tombs (tomb 5)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1747 (a, b), 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

In the tomb mentioned above was found the fairly well-preserved coiffure of the young woman, restrained and at the same time adorned by a very simple kind of "diadem" consisting of an arrangement of silk cords. The bulk of the surviving part of a plait suggests that her hair was braided into a single plait at the back of the head, around which was wound a decorated cord. Coiffures with plaits –one at the back of the head, or two framing the face– were very common at this period. Some examples can be seen in manuscript 135, containing the story of Job, which was probably copied and illuminated at Mystras and is now in the National Library of France (Velmans 1967, p. 226). The decorative "diadem", as can be seen on top of the head, is 5 cm. wide and consists of two groups of four cords fastened together, each 1 cm. wide. These groups were placed parallel with each other about 3 cm. apart. The two groups are connected by a broad cord about 0.5 cm. wide.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 11, 12. Id. 2000, pp. 27. Fiette 2000, pp. 39, 40, pl. III. 7, IV. 8.

P.K.



4 Female shoes

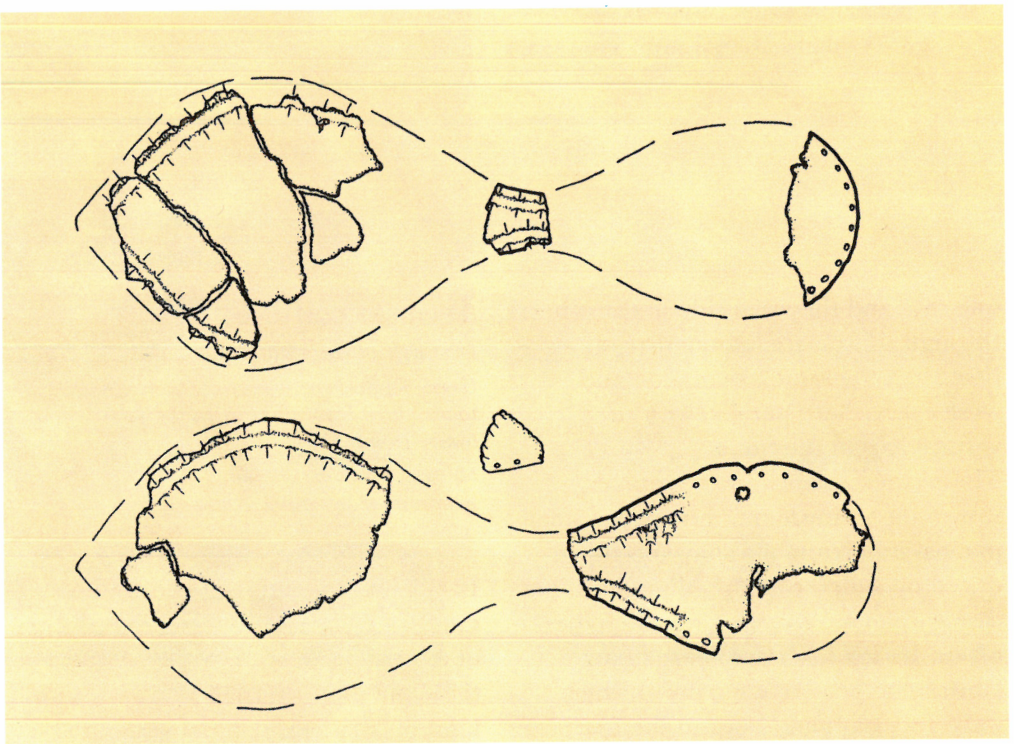
First half of the 15th century

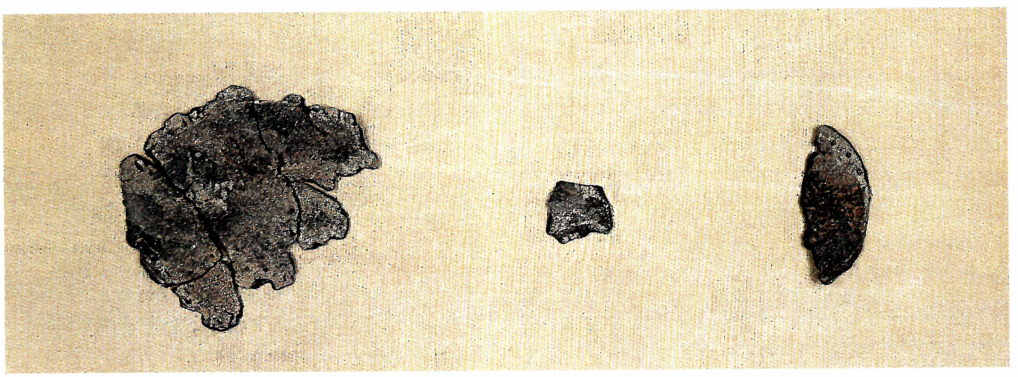
Leather

7×21 cm. (dimensions of sole after hypothetical reconstruction of shoe), 1×1.5 cm. (largest embroidered piece of leather)

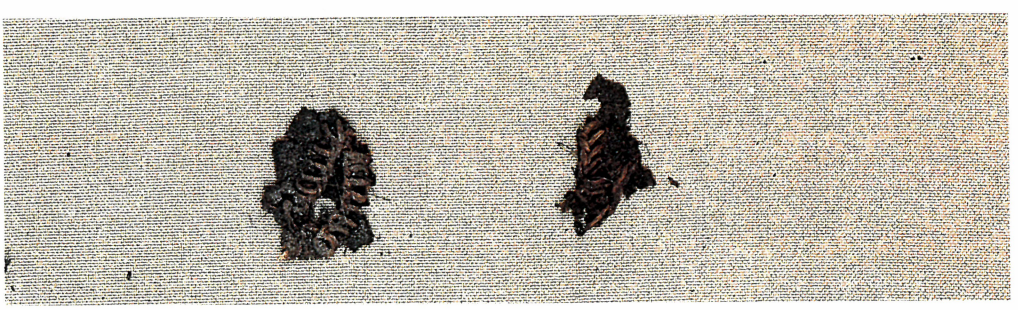
Hagia Sophia, north portico, underground tomb, third from the east of the second row (tomb 5)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1748 (soles), 1749a (embroidered pieces), 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities









Numerous small pieces of leather shoes are associated with the female burial. They are mainly pieces of two soles, that are enough to restore their form: they were symmetrical soles, with no clear distinction between the right and left foot. Undifferentiated soles of this type are characteristic of Early Christian and Byzantine shoes, but are unknown in medieval western Europe, where shoes were made with clearly distinguished right and left feet down to the 17th century. The archaeologist Marquita Volken was able to make a hypothetical reconstruction of the form of the shoes from Mystras based on the technical features of the soles and the different types of hole around the edges, which correspond to different kinds of stitches. They were probably *pasoumia*, which would have been made in a mould, again a type of shoe not in fashion in 15th century Europe. Thus, whereas other elements in the female attire worn at Mystras attest to western influences and commercial contacts, the shoes worn by the young aristocratic woman reveal an adherence to the old tradition. It may legitimately be deduced, therefore, that such shoes continued to be made without interruption in the territories of the Byzantine empire to cover the needs of the local market. This view is also supported by other features of shoes of the same period that have been found in excavations at Mystras, which are now on display in the site museum. It is interesting to note that there is an area on the underside of the soles, at the heels, that has

Reconstruction of the soles of the shoes (drawing: Marquita Volken).

no trace of wear, because it was covered by a small protective plate.
Along with the soles were found two pieces of leather with embroidered decoration consisting of a silk thread applied in a spiralling line forming a kind of cord around a hole opened in the leather. These two pieces probably came from the uppers. Because of their small size and the scant evidence they provide, it was not possible to incorporate them in the proposed reconstruction of the female shoes. If this pattern covered a large area, the uppers of the shoes will have given the impression of open-work. Embroidered female shoes are known already in the Early Christian period, when John Chrysostomos censured women who wore lavishly decorated leather shoes with threads sewn to them (PG 57, 502). Several of the Coptic shoes that have survived are also richly decorated (Rutschowscaya 1986, pp. 85, 86, fig. 4). Byzantine iconography, however, has little to say about the form of female shoes, since the long female dresses do not permit them to be seen.

Publications: Kalamara 2000, pp. 108, 109. Volken 2000, pp. 99-102.

P.K.

5 Part of a shoe

Late 14th-early 15th century

Leather

circa 4x6 cm. (greatest preserved dimensions)

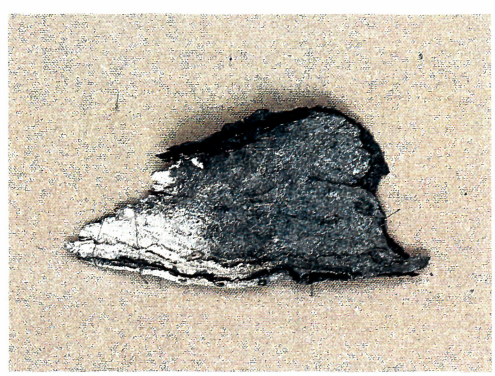
Hagia Sophia, west of the church, underground tomb (tomb B)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1749b, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

This is perhaps to be identified with the piece of a leather shoe said by the excavator to have been found at the east end of tomb B, which was also used for multiple burials. According to Marquita Volken, this piece comes from the front end of the uppers of a shoe of *pasoumi* type, similar to that from the female burial mentioned above. The leather is turned back around the edge and has a row of holes at 0.5 cm. intervals set around the slightly raised section. Part of a thin nail is preserved in one of these holes.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 2, 3. Kalamara 2000, pp. 108, 109. Volken 2000, pp. 99-102 (where this piece is inadvertently regarded as being found together with the remains of the young woman's shoes).

P.K.



6 Iron Shoe Protectors from Mystras

14th-15th century

Iron

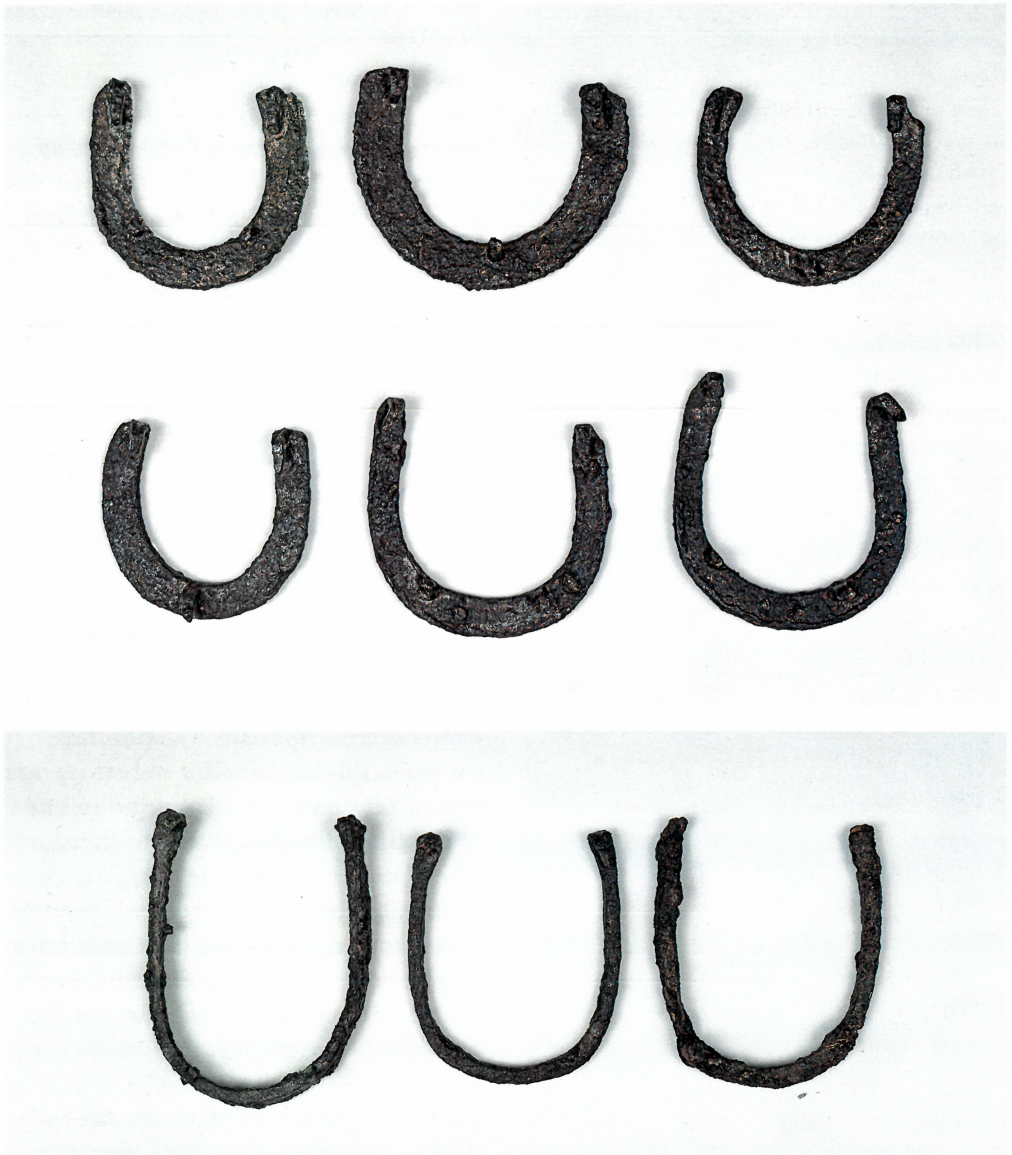
a. Elongated semicircular tips: height 1.6 cm., length 9.6 cm., width 8 cm. (average)

b. Semicircular tips: height 1.1 cm., length 6 cm., width 7 cm. (average)

Mystras archaeological site, Hagia Anna, Peribleptos, Hagia Sophia

Mystras Museum, inv. nos. 1448, 1449, 1740-1744, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Among the finds from the excavated tombs numerous iron shoe protectors were found. The irons are formed into a semicircular shape with spikes that held them to the soles. The irons can be separated into two types. The first type is a semicircle with elongated ends. The ends have been shaped into points which extend upwards to fix to the shoe. On the semicircular part there are two spikes equidistant from the center of the curve for attachment to the shoe. The elongated type have a square profile for the iron. The second kind of iron is only a semicircle. The ends have also been shaped into points and there can be either one or two spikes on the semicircle. The profile of the iron is a flat rectangle.
Even if the iron protectors are the only evidence left from the shoes, they can still give some information about the shoes. The first indication is given by the points and spikes which are turned upwards, the tips of which have been hammered until they point slightly downwards. This indication allows us to exclude the possibility that the irons were used on wood soled shoes because in that case the tips of the points and spikes would be straight. Thus the soles



must have been made of leather.
The irons were attached to the soles by the spikes and points. The upturned points spikes would have been pushed into the sole from the side that came in contact with the ground. Then the shoe could have been placed on a small iron support and the points and spikes pounded further with a hammer until they folded over became flattened. In addition, the space between the iron base and the folded over spikes permits an estimation of sole thickness. Taking into account that leather becomes compressed when pounded, the soles would have been between 3 to 6 mm. thick. Some of the flat semicircular irons have the folded over spikes and points at two different heights. The spike being taller than the point. The points seem to have passed through one layer of leather while the spikes passed through two layers.
The shape and size of the irons suggests that the were used on the heel part of the shoe. It is not yet agreed on when raised heels came into use, but seems to be an invention which appears during the 15th century in the East and end of 16th century in Europe. The two different kinds may indicate use on different kinds of shoes, but until more shoes are found intact, this can only remain a theory.
Little is known about medieval shoes in Greece because of a lack of known examples. A pair of fragmented soles, were also found at Mystras (Volken 2000, p. 101, pl. XI.25). The symmetrical shape is similar to those from Coptic and Byzantine collections, where the sole and upper are cut symmetrically, giving neither a right nor left oriented shoe (Montembault 2000, p. 82, Class I & II). For comparison the exact same kind of shoe irons are found in early 16th century to 18th century Russia, primarily Moscow (Veksler et. al. 1997). As in Mystras, there are both elongated and semicircle types. The 16th century irons have like Mystra, points and spikes contiguous with the base (Veksler et al. 1997, drawing 1, nos. 1-9, drawing 2, nos. 1-6), but the 17th century examples have a combination of points and holes pierced to be used with nails (Veksler et al. 1997, drawing 2, no. 7, drawing 3, nos. 1-4 and 6). In the 18th century example, only a small flat plate is used with holes for nails (Veklser et al. 1997, drawing 3, no. 5). Other iron shoe protections have been found in Novgorod, dated as being 14th century (Izymova 1965, p. 80), but this early date has deen put in question by researchers and the irons are probably from the 15h or 16th century (Veksler et al. 1997, p. 114). Also, several similar irons have been reported in relation with the Hungarian folklore costume which are believed to be from an ancient (15th century) southern

influence (Gáborjan 1957, p. 569, Id. 1958, pp. 60-61, fig. 33, Id. 1985, p. 51). Perhaps the full understanding of these proto-heel irons can be discovered in the future.

Unpublished

S. & M.V.

7 Part of a buttoned garment

Late 14th-early 15th century

Silk and gilded silver thread

Hagia Sophia, north portico, underground tomb in the second row (tomb 7)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1750, 1751, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities



The excavation of another of the underground tombs in the north portico of Hagia Sophia yielded some important, though very fragmentary, evidence relating to dress. According to the excavation day-book, one of the four people interred in it was covered "partly by decomposed brown material" and on the breast "the garment was open and had buttons and button-holes". The remains of the outer garment of the deceased described by the excavator may be identified with the pieces of a weft-faced compound tabby silk, *(tetramito)* (kind of weave) now of a brown shade on display, since some of these have buttons, made of a twisted cord of thread, also silk. Although the form of the garment cannot be reconstructed, it is evident that the particular dress was buttoned at the front, probably for its full length, as in the case of the full-length male outer tunics worn by the aristocracy of the Palaiologan period; it may conceivably have been fastened only at the breast, however, a feature associated with western dress models. The fragmentary condition in which the silk is preserved also makes it difficult

to determine the pattern of the fabric, though it was certainly richly decorated during weaving. The pattern, indeed, was embellished with gilded silver thread. The kind of weave used in its manufacture, like that of the garments worn by the young woman in tomb 5, point to a drawloom. Special mention may be made of one small piece of silk, measuring 6×3 cm., in which the turned hem is preserved, and which probably came from a visible part of the garment, such as the neckline or the ends of the sleeves, since it is adorned with four small "relief" flowers. A thick cord consisting of four pairs of gold thread, winds to form a small flower and then continues straight for 0.5 cm. before winding again to form the next flower. The cord is sewn to the fabric by the technique of *klapota* embroideries known to the Byzantines. We may note, finally, that few traces of a second fabric are preserved on the inner side of the silk, in contact with some of the hems, suggesting that the garment was reinforced by an inner lining.
The techniques used in the manufacture and decoration of the fabric, and the raw materials used, silk and gilded silver thread, leave no doubt that the wearer of the garment was a member of the Mystras aristocracy. Along with this garment were found part of a fringed silk fabric, possibly part of a kerchief, which noblemen used to hang in their sash or around their waist (not displayed because of its poor condition).

Publications: Drandakis 1955, p. 13. Flury – Schweizer 2000, pp. 56, 57, 70-73, pl. VII/7. 13, VII/8. Kalamara 2000, pp. 107-108. Kalamara – Valansot 2000, pp. 120, 121.

P.K.

8 Four metal buttons

Late Byzantine period

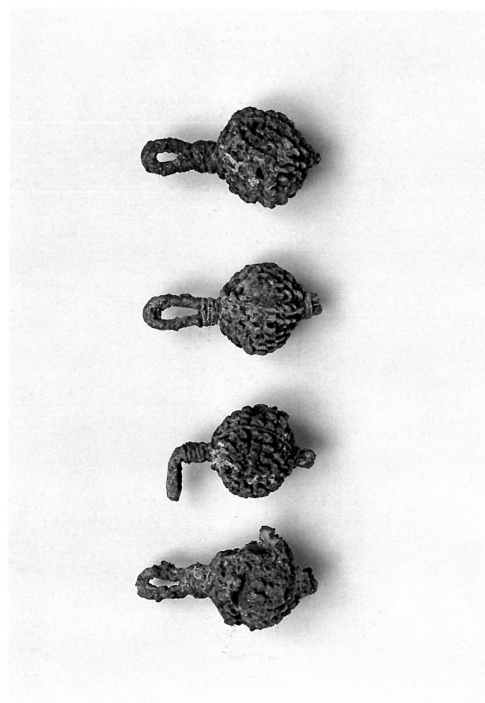
Bronze

Greatest diameter 1.5 cm., height 2.6-2.7 cm. (including the attachment knob)

Hagia Anna, 4th tomb inside the church (1952 excavation)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 167, 168, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

The buttons have a scarcely visible spherical core, which was evidently formed of two squares placed at an angle each other, with the corners folded over in the direction of the other square, and the centres spearated from each other by some distance. In the middle is a hole through which is passed a doubled wire, which serves as the vertical axis of the small "sphere". The two ends of this wire are visible at one pole of the sphere, while at the other there is a loop formed by the doubled wire, which was used to sew the button to the garment. The outside of the small sphere is covered with a layered spiral wire. This wire decoration is fastened to the surface of the button by two other wires that basically link the two free ends of the "axis" that are visible at one pole of the button, converging from four different points on the base of the loop, around which they are wound several times. The form of the button resembles a blackberry or an acorn.
Small spherical buttons were in fashion during the Palaiologan period, during which they were used for both male and female dress. The use of buttons to fasten cloaks, chitons, or jackets had became an established practice in the case of male garments as early as the 11th century. The need for them became more apparent with the turn during this period to tight-fitting garments. The main male garment worn by the Byzantine aristocracy after the 13th century was the full-length, sleeved, fairly narrow tunic, fastened with small spherical buttons all the way up the front (see, for example, the dress of the *skouterios* Kaniotes in the church of the Hodegetria at Mystras). During the Late Byzantine period, the number of possitions of buttons found on dress increased, with the appearance of new garments under the influence of western fashion.
Spherical buttons, decorated to a greater or lesser extent and dating from this and the Middle Byzantine period (Greek Jewellery 1997, p. 226, no. 276) have also been found in other parts of the Greek world. They are made in a great variety of techniques.



Unpublished

P.K.

9 Group of metal buttons

Late Byzantine period

Gilded bronze (traces of the gilding can be seen here and there)

Greatest diameter 1.1 cm., height 1.5-1.6 cm. (including the attachment knob)

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 166, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities



Group of twenty buttons, nineteen of which are in a good state of preservation, while of the twentieth only the loop by which it was fastened to the garment is preserved. They take the form of small spheres created by two hollow hemispherical sections joined along the axis at right angles to the axis of the attachment knob. It is obvious from the best-preserved examples that the point at which the hemispheres were joined was specially worked to make the joint completely invisible. A doubled band of metal of rectangular section pierces one of the hemispheres and is secured in the hole, thus forming the loop for attaching the button to the fabric. The ends of this band are concealed inside the button. Despite their very simple form, these buttons will have adorned garments worn by members of the Mystras aristocracy, since they were gilded. Their number, moreover, allows us to suppose that they were used on a full-length male tunic, which was fastened all the way up the front.
The technique of making spherical buttons by joining together two hemispherical parts that were probably cast in a mould, was very common from the 13th to the 15th century, as is clear from examples found at Sardis (Waldbaum 1983, p. 126, pl. 46, nos. 762-783, 799), though it goes back to Late Roman times (Waldbaum 1983, p. 126, pl. 46, no. 761). Jewellery attachments, such as small spheres used in earrings, were also made in a similar fashion (Davidson 1952, p. 251, pl. 108, no. 2014).

Unpublished

P.K.

10 Bone "button"

Late Byzantine period

Bone

Diameter 2.5 cm., greatest height 0.7 cm. (at the centre)

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1732, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities



The button takes the form of a truncated cone with a circular hole in the middle. The side of the cone is adorned with concentric scotiae (grooves), a fairly simple decoration in comparison with that of similar "buttons" found in other regions. These objects are widely found in the territories of the Byzantine empire, and some versions of them go back to Classical times. Their use is the subject of much debate. Some have been interpreted as buttons and others as spindle-whorls, on the basis of a range of criteria such as size, material –clay, stone, bone, ivory, etc.– weight and decoration, but none of the views expressed so far can be regarded as certain (Davidson 1952, pp. 296-304, Ploug – Oldenburg 1969, pp. 118-128, Chavane 1975, pp. 88-101). The theory that they were spindlewhorls is, of course, supported by the fact that some of them have been found together with a spindle (Petrie 1974, pl. LXVI, Daux 1964, pp. 696, 699). Others, however, are very small (Ploug – Oldenburg 1969, p. 120) or belong to a version with more than one hole (Davidson 1952, p. 298), and inevitably call to mind buttons. It is possible that the cloaks worn by officials depicted in Middle Byzantine manuscripts, such as codex 1 of the Vatican Library, codex A 103 of the Lavra Monastery, codex 61 of the Dionysiou Monastery, and Coislin 79 of the National Library of France (Kalamara 1995, pl. 50, 51, 54-56), may have been fastened by large circular buttons of this type, with a hole at the centre through which a cord could be passed. The evidence at present is inconclusive and further discoveries are awaited to shed some light on it.

Unpublished

P.K.

11 Button mould

Late Byzantine period

Black stone

4×4.3 cm. (dimensions of long sides), thickness 1,2 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1739, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

One plaque survives of the two similar ones of which the mould was originally made. It is rectangular and has been carved in such a way as to produce a hemisphere for a spherical metal button with an integral loop to fasten it to the garment. The second hemisphere will have been made in the now lost second plaque of the mould. The two hemispheres were designed to be joined together long the axis of the button parallel with the loop. The edge of the surface was decorated with vertical flutes,



similarly oriented, and the unattached pole of the sphere was emphasised by a flower in a circular medallion.
The buttons produced by the mould will have had a diameter of 1.1 cm. and a height of 1.7 cm. From the two edges at the side of the plaque two wide, funnel-shaped hollow channels, through which the fluid metal was poured, led to the sphere. Two small cavities, set in diagonally opposite corners of the plaque, were used to secure the two parts of the mould firmly together.
Similar moulds were used to produce jewellery and metal dress accessories in general throughout the entire Byzantine period (Davidson 1952, pp. 203, 307-310, Bavant 1990, pp. 220-224, The Glory of Byzantium 1997, pp. 315, 317, no. 215-216).
The evidence provided by buttons preserved from this period suggests that the sphere produced by the mould was not solid, and in this case, the technique by which the hollow inside them was created requires investigation. The most probable interpretation seems to be the one advanced to account for the production of hollow decorative elements suspended from prependulia (The Glory of Byzantium 1997, pp. 316, 317, no. 216): the liquid metal was poured rapidly into the mould, and when it came into contact with the cold walls it solidified immediately, leaving the rest of it, which was still fluid, to escape through a hole. In the case of the Mystras mould, the smaller of the two channels mentioned above may have performed this function.
The discovery of this mould in the castle is a strong indication that in the Palaiologan period there was an industrial unit there producing metal dress accessories, and probably also jewellery, which presupposes the existence of the relevant technical expertise.

Unpublished

P.K.

12 Decorative band of fabric

Middle of the 14th-middle of the 15th century

Silk and gilded silver

Two parts: a) 15x1.5 cm., b) 9.5x1.5 cm.

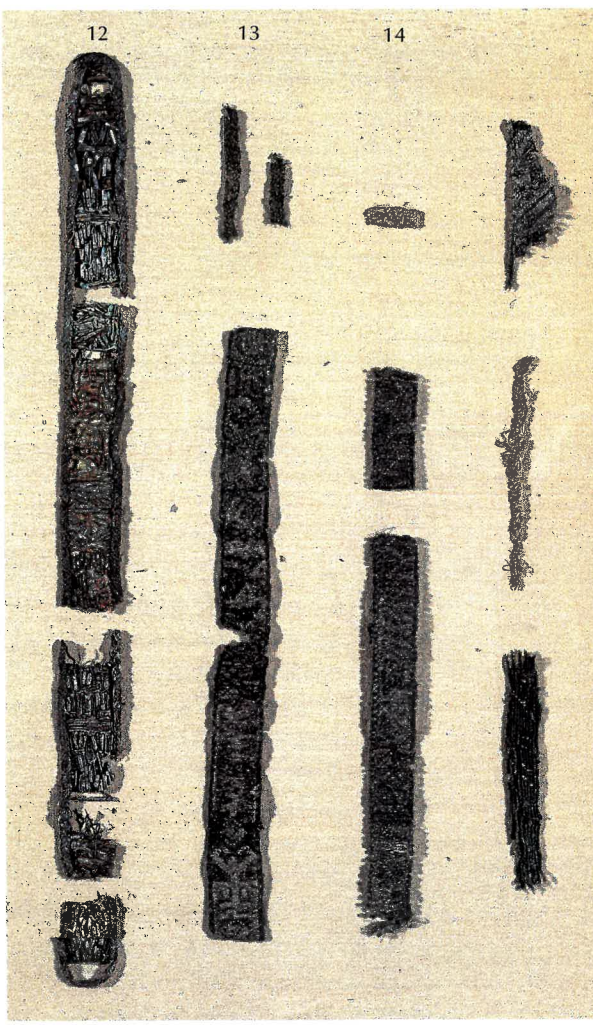
Hagia Sophia, underground tomb outside the church

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1752, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

The band is preserved almost complete and has a rounded end. The "skeleton" of it was made of silk thread in the *point couché* technique. The outer edge is defined by a little chain of eight gold threads linked with the main band at intervals by stitches. The fabric on which the silk threads were sewn is not preserved. The main face of the band is decorated by gilded silver cylinders of two different dimensions, which have been strung on silk thread and sewn to the band. Groups of three long cylinders are placed at intervals, creating rectangular panels, inside which smaller cylinders are arranged to form geometric X-patterns or lozenges.
In contrast with weaving, which was in decline during the Palaiologan period according to the evidence of contemporary sources (Lambros 1930, vol. III, p. 225, 263, and vol. IV, pp. 43, 44), the art of embroidery was greatly flourishing (Johnstone 1967, pp. 7, 77). One of the most common embroidery techniques of this period was *point couché*: clusters of threads, normally of metal, were attached to the surface of the cloth without passing through it. This was the technique used for the famous Byzantine *syrmakesika* (gold embroideries) (Chatzimichali 1956, pp. 447-498).
This band is probably to be identified with the one noted in the excavation day-book as having been found in "tomb B", to the west of the church, in which "a band resembling the *seirition* of a prelate's vestment" was found on the head of a child. *Seiritia* –again not described in detail– were found according to the excavator in two more tombs: one in front of the right jamb of the door on the north side of the church, where it was again associated with the coiffure of the dead person, and one in the second row of tombs at the north of the church, to the north of the one in front of the entrance; in this case, the *seirition* was found in the west part of the tomb, where the head would have been placed. Though it is not easy to connect band no. 12 with a specific burial, it may be supposed with some certainty that it was an element of a diadem worn by the deceased, or at least a headdress, which has not been preserved.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 2, 10, 12. Flury – Schweizer 2000, pp. 55-57, 62-65. Kalamara 2000, p. 109. Kalamara – Valansot 2000, p. 121.

P.K.



13 Decorative band of fabric

Middle of the 14th-middle of the 15th century

Silk and gilded silver

Two parts: a) 8.5×1.3 cm., b) 8×1.3 cm.

Hagia Sophia, underground tomb outside the church

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1752, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

A good length of the band is preserved, and it apparently had rounded ends. It consists of twenty-four silk cords made of four threads each and placed in pairs twisted in different directions so as to create the impression of herring-bone pattern, and also of gilded silver threads that move and wind in a group across the width of the band. Two pairs of cords at the edges form the border of the band. Metal threads interwoven with the cords create a variety of mainly geometric motifs. On the front of the band are fairly well-preserved traces of a cross, with droplets in the lower panels of the arms and a floral motif in place of the top, vertical arm. The band was probably made on a tablet loom with twenty-four cards. The complete absence today of the weft, which would have created the background weave poses problems regarding the technique by which it was made.
Though it is not easy to associate this band with a particular tomb (see on band no. 12), it may again be assumed that it was an element of a diadem or headdress that has not been preserved.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 2, 10, 12. Flury – Schweizer 2000, pp. 55-57, 66-67. Kalamara 2000, p. 108. Kalamara – Valansot 2000, p. 121.

P.K.

14 Decorative band of fabric

Middle of the 14th-middle of the 15th century

Silk, silver and gilded silver

Parts of width 1.02 cm. and length about 10 cm., 7 cm., 6 cm., 4.5 cm., and 3 cm. or less

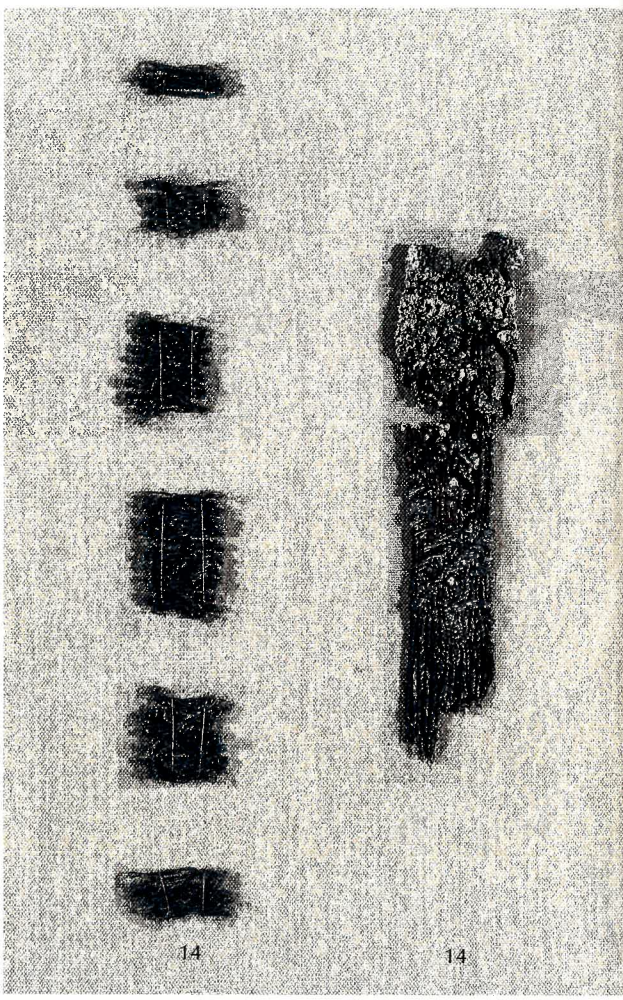
Hagia Sophia, underground tomb outside the church

Mystras Museum, inv. nos. 1752, 1753, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

The band consists of gilded silver wires in groups of six that wind and, as they change direction, encircle a double cord that forms the border of the band. On one side, there are also fifteen cords attached at the centre of the metal wires, creating a band at two levels. These cords are placed in pairs twisted in different directions so as to give the impression of herring-bone pattern. Wires and cords are interwoven to form geometric patterns on this side. It should be noted, however, that the metal threads can be made out over only a small area. On the other side, in contrast, the cords are not visible, and the gilded silver threads can be seen over almost the full width of the band. They are held together at each point where they change direction by pairs of threads, also of metal, set parallel to the longitudinal axis of the band and forming zigzags and lozenges. The technique by which the band was made is a matter of question: according to one view, it was woven on a tablet loom, though another theory suggests it was an embroidery combining *point couché* technique with sewn cords.
It is difficult to assign this band to a particular tomb (see on band no. 12). It may be assumed, however, that it was an element of a diadem or headcover that has not been preserved.

Publications: Drandakis 1955, pp. 2, 10, 12. Flury – Schweizer 2000, pp. 55-57, 68-71, 74, pl. VII/6, VII/7, VII/9. Kalamara 2000, p. 108, 117. Kalamara – Valansot 2000, p. 121.

P.K.



14

15 Belt buckle

Late Byzantine period

Bronze

Length of buckle when fastened 7.5 cm. length of each part 5 cm. and 4.5 cm., diameter of circular element circa 2.5 cm. (large), 1.5 cm. (small), width of pin to fasten the fabric 2.3 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 170, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Both sections are preserved of a buckle for a narrow belt, the width of which cannot have been greater than 2 cm. Each section consists of two circular elements. More specifically, one section consists of two contiguous circles of equal size, one of which has an integral pin on the back to attach it to the fabric while the other is pierced by a trapezoidal hole. The second section consists of two circles of unequal size, the larger one of which again has an integral pin on the back to fasten it to the fabric, while the smaller one is connected to it by a long tongue that was used to fasten the buckle, passing through the hole in the first section. The decoration of the buckle consists of wedges cut radially around the edges of the circles, of hemispherical depressions arranged in circles inside the zone of the radial wedges, and of engraved circles with depressions at the centre, one at the centre of the large circle of the buckle and the others, which intersect, arranged in a circle around it. The central part of the circle with the trapezoidal hole is left undecorated, since when the buckle was fastened it was covered by the smaller circle of the second section. This has engraved circles arranged in the manner already described, which fill the apparent gap in its decoration. Traces left by a file are evident on both sides of the buckle.

Unpublished

P.K.

15



16



16 Belt buckle

Late Byzantine period

Bronze

Length of buckle 5.3 cm., diameter of circular element circa 2.8 cm. (large), 1.9 cm. (small), width of pin for fastening it to fabric 2.5 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 171, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

One section is preserved of a buckle similar to no. 15. It consists of two circles of unequal size, the larger of which has an integral pin at the back to fasten it to the fabric, while the smaller is linked to it by a long part that was used to fasten the buckle, since it was designed to pass through and hook into a hole in the second, now lost section. The decoration of the buckle consists of wedges cut radially around the edges of the large circle, of hemispherical depressions arranged in circles inside the zone of the radial wedges, and of engraved circles with depressions at the centre, one at the centre of the large circle of the buckle, five placed around it, and the rest, which intersect, arranged in a circle around them. The small circle has only the kernel of the decoration of

the larger one, that is, the engraved circles arranged in the manner already described. The two missing outer decorative zones will have been replaced by the decoration around the edge of the pierced circle in the second section. Traces left by a file are evident on both sides of the buckle. The resemblance between the two buckles permits us to assume that they were the work of the same craftsman, probably a local, to whom several inhabitants of Mystras would have had access. The latter buckle, however, was for a broader belt, about 2.5 cm. wide.

Unpublished

P.K.

17 Finger-ring

14th c.

Gold. Engraved decoration

Interior diameter of hoop 1,8 cm., diameter of bezel 1,6 cm.

Sea off Monemvasia Castle

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1731, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Heavy gold signet-ring. Solid hoop of semicircular section that flares at the shoulders, where it has relief decoration of palmettes set in panels of winding floral scrolls and traces of an inlaid material, possibly niello. Circular bezel with a flat surface. At the centre of this is depicted a coat-of-arms with a lion surrounded by a ring-punched border and the inscription ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΒΕΣΤΙΑΡΙΟΥ (*Sebastos Vestiariou*) inscribed mirrorwise in very fine-quality lettering. The shape, the articulation of the decoration of the bezel, and the decoration of the shoulders recall respectively the finger-ring of Eumorphopoulos in the Benaki Museum (Greek Jewellery 1997, no. 290, p. 236, Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art 1986, no. 215, p. 195), two gold signet-rings from the Dumbarton Oaks collection (Ross 1965, nos. 129 and 131, pp. 90-92), and the gold signet-ring of Paxenos Apelates, now in the Cabinet des Médailles (Byzance 1992, no. 252, p. 338), all of which are dated to the 14th century. The combination of a main motif in the type of a coat-of-arms and a Greek inscription is found in finger-rings dating from the 13th-14th century in the Kanellopoulos collection (Spieser 1972, no. 21, p. 133).

The coat-of-arms with the lion was positioned in the central medallion of the bezel, usually occupied by the owner's monogram, probably to indicate the family origins of the owner, while the inscription supplied his office.

The use of heraldic lions for decorative purposes on finger-rings, as on the ring from the Dumbarton Oaks collection, has been associated with the imperial court at Constantinople (Ross 1965, no. 131, p. 92). It is also a common motif in Latin coats-of-arms. Its presence at Mystras, which was politically and culturally directly dependent on the capital, has been associated with the despot Manuel Kantakouzenos (1348-1380) and his wife, the western princess Isabella de Lusignan (Louvi 1980, p. 194).

It is preserved on two decorative slabs built into the masonry above the arched gateway and next to the south two-light window in the church of the Peribleptos (third quarter of the 14th c.), the erection of which is attributed to Manuel and Isabella. It also occurs on an architrave block bearing the latter's monogram, now in the Museum, since the Lusignan family had the same emblem.

The inscription ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΒΕΣΤΙΑΡΙΟΥ *(Sebastos Vestiariou)* refers to an honorary title and an office that make their appearance in the Byzantine administrative hierarchy in the Middle Byzantine period, and which had been significantly modified by Palaiologan times.

The epithet *sebastos*, a translation of the imperial epithet *augustus*, was established by Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) as a palace title that had several ranks *(pansebastos, protosebastos, panhypersebastos, sebastohypertatos)*, and during the Komnenian period was bestowed exclusively on members of the imperial family by blood or marriage. (Stiernon 1965, pp. 226-228). At the beginning of the Late Byzantine period, the title, which was in any case awarded to high-ranking officials in the Byzantine court hierarchy, was reduced to being purchased by wealthy merchants and bankers. Under the Palaiologoi, it evolved into an officium that was given to administrative officials or officers of garrisons of towns, and especially of castles: according to Pseudo-Kodinos (14th c.), it ranked 76th in the court hierarchy (Stiernon 1965, p. 229). Mention of the title in seals owned by members of the Palaiologos family (Schlumberger 1884, pp. 582, 685, Ross 1965, p. 91) suggests that the memory of the dynastic importance of the original title was probably kept alive at this



period. According to Pseudo-Kodinos, the *vestiariou* was a special official who followed the emperor on his naval campaigns in a ship carrying the *vestiarion*, the imperial public treasury in which were kept weapons, precious metals, gifts and money. The office and its duties were associated with one of the most important palace departments in the imperial administration, the *vestiarion*. This was the imperial wardrobe until the 10th century, when it was divided into a private *(oikeiakon basilikon vestiarion)* and a public *(mega basilikon vestiarion)* section. The public *vestiarion* was a combined arsenal and treasury in which the imperial supplies of precious metals were kept. From the middle of the 11th to the 14th century, it was converted into the central financial service controlling state income and expenditure, and was headed by the *prokathemenos* (president) of the *vestiarion*, whose relationship to the *vestiariou* is not clear (Ebersolt 1930, p. 87, note 5, Failler 1987, p. 201). References in the literary sources stress the military capacity of this office, which appears during the 13th and 14th century to have replace the old office of military eparch, and no longer had the purely administrative function associated with officials bearing the same title in previous centuries (Failler 1987, pp. 200-201).

In 1442 there was a *vestiarion* in the Peloponnese organised on the model of the great *basilikon vestiarion* of Constantinople. The historian George Frantzes, indeed, received from the emperor John VIII Palaiologos the title of *protovestiarites*, to whom the *prokathemenos* of the *vestiarion* was subordinate (Zakythinos 1975, vol. II, pp. 101, 228).

The use of precious metals, the exceptionally fine quality of the niello technique used for the decoration of finger-rings bearing the insignia of officials of the imperial Court (Byzantine Art, European Art 1964, pp. 334-335), and the motif of the heraldic lion link the ring with Constantinopolitan models and suggest that its owner, the *sevastos vestiariou*, was probably a high-ranking official of the despotate of the Morea, whose rulers followed the administrative model of the imperial court of the Byzantine capital.

Unpublished

E.K.

18 Finger-ring

Late Byzantine period

Bronze

Diameter of hoop 2 cm., dimensions of bezel 1.8×1.3 cm.

Mystras archaeological site (1952 excavations)

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1431, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

This is a plain ring with a band-hoop and a flat, oval bezel. The bezel is decorated with small engraved circles with a small depression at the centre, which are arranged around the edge, apart from one that marks its centre. This specific type of decoration is very common throughout the entire Byzantine period, executed in metal, bone and other materials (Davidson 1952, pp. 133, 136, 188, 191, 222, 258, 259, pl. 67, 69, 84, 100, 110, nos. 914, 953, 1379, 1401, 1728, 1746, 2071, 2073, 2074, 2080-2082, Waldbaum 1983, pl. 26, 38, 51, nos. 417, 588, 890). Finger-rings with similar decoration are dated to the Early Christian and Middle Byzantine periods (Davidson 1952, pp. 239, 247, pl. 103, 104, 106, nos. 1850, 1851, 1886, 1894, 1978, Greek Jewellery 1997, p. 213, no. 251). The surface of the Mystras ring bears evident traces of filing. It should in any case be noted that this was a piece of jewellery of little value.

Unpublished

P.K.



18

19 Finger-ring

Late Byzantine period

Bronze

Diameter 1.7 cm., thickness 0.4 cm., diameter of bezel 1.4 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1433, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Finger-ring with a slightly convex, plain hoop, to the edges of which is attached a flat, oval bezel engraved with simple geometric motifs: in a border that follows the oval shape of the bezel is a double lozenge with a cross at the centre and groups of small irregular lines in the gaps between the sides of the lozenges and the border. Finger-rings of similar type, dating from the 10th to the 13th century, have been found at Corinth (Davidson 1952, p. 231, type Q, pl. 106).

Unpublished

A.M.



19



20

20 Finger-ring

Late Byzantine period

Bronze

Diameter 1.7 cm., thickness 0.6 cm., diameter of bezel 1.2 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1435, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Finger-ring with a convex hoop that flares slightly upwards and is adorned by groups of engraved lines set horizontally or vertically. It ends in a round, slightly raised bezel set on a ring and adorned by two small engraved winding floral scrolls that spring from a horizontal stem. Similar finger-rings, ranging in date from probably the 3rd to the 13th century, have been found at Corinth (Davidson 1952, p. 229, type G, pl. 103, 104).

Unpublished

A.M

21 Finger-ring

Late Byzantine period

Bronze and glass paste, traces of silver-gilding around the bezel

Diameter 1.9 cm., thickness 0,4 cm., diameter of bezel 1.5 cm.

Mystras archaeological site, "Little Palace"

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1729, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

The finger-ring consists of a slightly convex hoop, to the ends of which is attached a distinctly projecting oval bezel. The bezel consists of a flat surface in which glass paste of a greenish hue is inlaid and held in place by a narrow dentilated band. Two engraved lines encircle the base of the band. Similar rings, range in date from the Early Christian period to the period of Turkish rule. (Davidson 1952, p. 228, type C, pl. 102).

Unpublished

A.M.

22 Dress accessories

Late Byzantine period

Gilded silver with inlaid enamel decoration

Height 2,4 cm. without ring, 4,2 cm. with the ring, width 2,1 cm.

Sparta, sanctuary of Artemis Orthia

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1420, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Pair of jewellery items in the shape of a moon three-quarters full. They consist of two thin convex metal plates fastened together, and have a horseshoe-shaped suspension ring secured by rivets. In the top of each plate is a small hole. They have the same decoration on both sides, consisting of a circle divided by diagonal lines into four trapezoidal panels, the interiors of which are occupied by small stylised *fleurs-de-lis*. The spaces between the circle and the outer border are adorned by small winding floral scrolls, which also terminate in *fleurs-de-lis*. Use is made of red, blue, green and white colour for the decorative motifs.
The inlaid enamel technique was used



21



22

in Byzantium from the 9th century onwards for the decoration of a variety of objects, including jewellery, though also for dress accessories in general. These particular items, which were earlier identified as earrings (Dawkins 1929, p. 49, pl. VI, Byzantine Art, European Art, pp. 333) are associated by their shape, hollow inside, fairly thick suspension ring, the holes in the top and the decoration with a range of jewellery worn by men and women, suspended from headdresses or diadems in such a way as to frame the cheeks or temples. They probably contained small perfumed pieces of cloth and were a common dress element amongst high-ranking officials and the aristocracy. This type of jewellery with inlaid enamel decoration has been assigned to Constantinopolitan workshops, and the majority of the known examples date from the Middle Byzantine period (Wixom 1995, pp. 659-662. The Glory of Byzantium 1997, pp. 170-171, 309-311).
Two other items of jewellery from Corinth, dating from the Middle Byzantine period, are of similar form and shape (Davidson 1952, p. 254, no. 2045, 2047, pl. 108); inside one of these was found a piece of cotton fabric.
The pieces from Mystras were discovered in a tomb dated by the excavators to the 10th-11th century. However, the identification suggested here, and the fact that they are decorated with *fleur-de-lis*, which are common during the late byzantine period makes a later date more probable.

Publications: Dawkins 1929, p. 49, pl. VI. L'art byzantin 1964, pp. 378-379.

A.M.

23 Earrings

Late Byzantine period

Gilded silver

Height 1 cm. without ring, 2.2 cm. with suspension ring, width 1.6 cm., width of ring 0.1-0.2 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1421, 1422, 1423, 1424, 1425, 1440, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Group of crescent-shaped earrings. They consist of two thin convex plates fastened together, and have a semicircular suspension ring secured by rivets; the ring is compressed and flares at the ends, where the rivet enters the catch. The main decorative motif on one side consists of a medallion engraved with the monogram of the Palaiologoi, bordered by two floral scrolls terminating in trefoils. On the other side, again set amidst scrolls with semi-palmettes, can be seen an emblem formed of two interlocking zigzag lines set in a circle or a cruciform guilloche (key of Solomon). Earrings of the same shape are known from Sardis, dating from the Middle and Late Byzantine period (Waldbaum 1983, pp. 125-126, nos. 758, 759, pl. 46), and they were widely found in the Islamic world (The Glory of Byzantium 1997, p. 418).
The monogram of the Palaiologoi, formed of the letters Π, Α, Λ, Γ, is found on coins, sculptures and jewellery and is very common in the Late Byzantine sculptures of Mystras (see entry no 28). The emblem formed of two interlocking lines is also found at Mystras, on a poros slab published by Gabriel Millet (Millet 1910, pl. 52.9). It has also been identified on a fragment of a gravestone in the Archaeological Museum of Constantinople, which probably belonged to the funerary monument of the empress Theodora, wife of Michael VIII





Palaiologos, who died in 1303 (Mango – Hawkins 1968, pp. 180-181), and on the funeral cloth of Maria Mangop, where it is combined with emblems and monograms of the families of the Palaiologoi and Asanids (Mango – Hawkins 1968, p. 181). The cruciform guilloche was a popular motif at all periods in Byzantine art and is to be found at Mystras in details of the sculptural decoration of the Peribleptos and Hagia Sophia (Millet 1910, pl. 49.1, 116.4, 56.10).
The above symbols, together with other emblems of the Palaiologoi, occur in the Putna monastery in Romania, on ecclesiastical vestments dating from the 15th century which are associated with Stephen the Great of Moldavia and his wife, Maria Mangop (Tafrali 1925, pl. XL, Millet 1939, pl. V). Their association with the heraldry of the Palaiologan dynasty thus seems inescapable.

The presence of the insignia of the Palaiologan dynasty on the earrings allow them to be attributed to members of this family who lived at Mystras after 1384, and makes it probable that they were items that were suspended from the headdress or diadem, since the way they were made recalls similar examples, though they are much smaller.
Their large numbers and the exact repetition of the form possibly suggest that they were made in a local workshop, further evidence for the existence of which is provided by the discovery of a mould for making buttons (see entry no. 11).

Unpublished

A.M.



24 Earring

Late Byzantine period

Silver

Largest diameter 3 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1411, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

This is a plain, thin ring, secured in place by means of a simple hook. At the bottom are three small spheres set at intervals. The spheres consists of two hemispherical plates fastened together, the entire surface of which is decorated with embossed dots. They are held in place by a thin metal wire wound around the hoop.
Similar earrings, dating from the 9th to the 11th century, have been found at Corinth (Davidson 1952, pp. 249, 251, pl. 108), and at Otranto (D' Angela 1989, pp. 34, 40).

Unpublished

A.M.



25 Two (2) bracelets

Middle Byzantine period (probably 11th century)

Coloured glass

Diameter circa 5.5 cm.

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1492, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

These are plain circular bracelets of almost rectangular section, each of which is preserved in two parts. One bracelet is made of green glass paste. It has open ends, and there is a narrow groove in the middle that encircles the entire bracelet. The second bracelet is made of pink glass paste and also has open ends.
Glass bracelets are known from literary sources to have been worn from Roman times on in their simplest form: a plain band made either of a long piece of glass, or of two twisted pieces, often in contrasting colours.
Glass bracelets have been found in both Italy and Greece (Baldini-Lippolis 1999, pp. 185-186, Davidson 1952, pp. 263, pl. 112, Greek Jewellery 1997, pp. 172-174, 215, 230-233).
The excavations at Corinth have yielded glass bracelets of various types, ranging in date from Roman times to the Byzantine period (Baldini-Lippolis 1999, pp. 185-186, Davidson 1952, p. 262-265, pl. 112, 113, Greek Jewellery 1997, pp. 172-174, 215, 230-233). The type of plain circular bracelet possibly succeeded that with the open ends.
A new type of bracelet made its appearance probably at the beginning of the 11th century. It was distinguished by its wealth and variety of design (floral and animal motifs, inscriptions with a religious content), though only a few examples have survived, mainly in Italy (Baldini-Lippolis 1999, p. 175).





Glass jewellery was made by *hyelourgoi,* or *hyelepsoi* (Koukoules 1944-1950, vol. II.1, p. 213). Because of the risk of fire or the transmission of diseases, the workshops were preferably located outside the towns. If they were in or near a town, their site was strictly determined by the state, according to Armenopoulos (Pitsakis 1971, pp. 117-118).

Unpublished

Y.K.

26 Necklace

Late Byzantine period

Ivory

Diameter of fluted bead 1 cm., diameter of bead with rosettes 1.4 cm., length of piriform bead 1.4 cm., full length of necklace 64 cm.

Mystras archaeological site

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1730, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities



The necklace is formed of fifty-four melon-shaped ivory beads of different sizes. The beads may be divided into two groups on the basis of their size and decoration. The larger ones have rosettes and the smaller ones are fluted. In the present composition of the necklace, as proposed by the excavator Nikolaos Drandakis, a bead with rosettes is inserted after approximately eight fluted beads. One bead with rosettes and one smaller, piriform bead, have been placed at the ends of the necklace.
In the Byzantine period, necklace beads were also made of other materials (glass, stone, semiprecious stones, bronze, ceramic, porcelain and bone: (Davidson 1952, pp. 287-295, pl. 121-125). It is still very difficult to date jewellery of this kind.

Unpublished

Y.K.

ARTISTIC OUTPUT AT MYSTRAS

The large urban centres were places of intense cultural activity, in which the intellectual life was cultivated and artistic expression encouraged. They attracted social groups possessed of the economic ability and education to support artistic activity. One characteristic of the ruling class ideology was in any case a desire to promote themselves through works of art that were ultimately addressed to society as a whole (Laïou 1980 A, pp. 217-222, Eadem 1991, pp. 289-292). Throughout its entire life, the intellectual and artistic centre of Byzantium was Constantinople, the seat of the Byzantine emperor and the central administration. In the Late Byzantine period, after the capture of the city by the Crusaders, the state was politically fragmented into a number of small units, and several administrative centres were created, at Nicaea, Trebizond and Arta, each of which had its own output.

One of the most dynamic of these centres was Mystras, capital after 1348 of the semi-independent despotate of the Morea, which was usually ruled by the second-born son of the Byzantine emperor. Mystras always enjoyed direct political and cultural relations with Constantinople. The presence of emperors, members of the imperial family, and a circle of aristocrats and the scholars and artists that accompanied them was undoubtedly a major factor in the artistic movement and the cultural life that evolved in this Peloponnesian centre. It is notable that before the establishment of the institution of despot, the donors of charitable buildings at Mystras such as Hagios Demetrios, Hagioi Theodoroi, Hodegetria, were powerful church figures like Nikephoros Moschopoulos, his brother Aaron, Pachomios, and Daniel (Millet 1899, pp. 121-123, Chatzidakis 1979, pp. 152ff. Id. 1993, pp. 25, 47, 48). In the second half of the 14th century, by contrast, when Mystras had emerged as the capital of the despotate, sponsors came from the ranks of the highest-ranking administrative officials: the despot himself, Michael Kantakouzenos, built the churches of Hagia Sophia (Miklosich-Müller 1860-1890, vol. IV, pp. 472-474, Sinos 1999, col. 430-433) and the Peribleptos (Louvi 1980, pp. 201ff.), and the great protostrator, John Phrangopoulos built the Pantanassa (Millet 1899, pp. 134,135). Finally, the erection of the Palaiologan wing of the Palace is attributed to the emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (Sinos 1999, col. 472ff.).

Every form of art at Mystras was a high-quality expression of Byzantine artistic output, adopted Constantinopolitan models, and attests to an up-to-date awareness of developments in the expressive arts. In church architecture, for example, the predominant type is called the "Mystras mixed type", though this, like peripheral porticoes, blind arcading on the external façades of buildings, and curved roof edges, are associated with the architecture of the capital (Chatzidakis 1993, pp. 53-56, Sinos 1999, col. 424ff.). These features, which made their first appearance in the Hodegetria, were copied in other church buildings (Pantanassa, Hagios Demetrios).

170. Angel. Detail from a wall-painting in the chapel of the chrysobulls. 1312/3-1322. Mystras, Hodegetria.

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171. Ligature of the title of the protostrator Phrangopoulos, a high-ranking official in the despotate. Preserved on a sculpture in the Pantanassa, the church built by Phrangopoulos in 1428. Mystras.

172. The campanile of the Pantanassa has several western decorative elements. Mystras.

173. The poros pointed window-frames in wing A of the palace recall similar elements in Western architecture. Mystras.

Close relations with the capital city are also evident in mural painting. The earliest wall-paintings in the cathedral church of Hagios Demetrios follow a conservative painting current of the late 13th century, the heavy, bulky style found in Hagia Ephemia (Chatzidakis 1979, pp. 166-175, Mouriki 1978, pp. 70-71), and St Clement at Ochrid (Millet – Frolow 1962, pl. 1-19, 120), which can thereafter be distinguished in other monuments in areas neighbouring on Mystras, like the Chrysaphitissa (Chatzidakis 1979, p. 173, Albani 2000, pp. 99ff.). The wall-paintings of the Hodegetria, the katholikon of a monastery supported by imperial grants, are connected with more progressive trends in Palaiologan painting, as expressed in the Chora Monastery in Constantinople. (Mouriki 1978, pp.72-74, Chatzidakis 1993, pp. 59-67).

Survivals of ancient art, too, to be found in the iconography of Mystras, may also be attributed to an excellent knowledge of the Byzantine painting tradition. They include masks, nude figures, the spinario (youth removing a thorn), as well as the grisaille technique and other elements that seem to have passed into Palaiologan art by way of manuscripts of the Macedonian period (late 9th-early 11th century). These features are not regarded as a local phenomenon, but were cultivated by the intellectual vanguard of Constantinople, which was inspired by humanist trends (Mouriki 1987, pp. 240-243).

During the Late Byzantine period, however, the influence of western expressive manners made itself felt in the art of Mystras.

In ecclesiastical architecture, these influences were confined to individual decorative motifs: these include Late Gothic pointed relief arches with palmettes, at the windows and blind windows and the relief garland on the east façade of the Pantanassa, elements of the campanile in the same church and the Tower of the Refectory of the Peribleptos, and relief decorative elements on the façades of the katholikon of the Peribleptos. Decorative features of western origins, such as fleurs-de-lis, griffins and coats-of-arms also penetrated the sculptural elements of

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churches, particularly of Hagia Sophia and the Peribleptos (Mouriki 1987, pp. 212-213, Sinos 1999, col. 437-440).
In the case of secular architecture, western models were followed only in the Palace. The earliest wing exhibits great affinity with the Frankish residence at Chlemoutsi. Morphological features of the windows and doorways of the building, erected by Manuel Kantakouzenos after the middle of the 14th century, recall the Late Gothic architecture of the same period. The typology of this building, too, follows the types of contemporary mansions in Italy, though it should be regarded as a re-borrowing, since the same forms are found on Byzantine territory at an earlier date. The final wing of the Palace, the Palaiologan wing, was an early 15th century building also constructed on the model of mansions in Italian towns, such as the Palazzo Ducale in Venice (Sinos 1987, pp. 105-127, Id. 1999, col. 72ff., Dimakopoulos 2001, pp. 33, 34).

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174. Plaque above the door in the enclosure wall of the Peribleptos Monastery, bearing the ligature of its name accompanied by lions rampant and fleurs-de-lis. Mystras.

175. The fleur-de-lis, a Frankish emblem, is common on sculptures at Mystras. Mystras, Peribleptos, iconostasis architrave.

176. Western influence is evident in the east façade of the church of the Panatanassa. 1428. Mystras.

In painting, the influence of Romanesque and Late Gothic art are summed up in stylistic details such as the endeavour to render the third dimension, in minor iconographic elements (e.g. faces with a floral scroll emerging from the mouth), and in the colours used (Hagios Demetrios and the Pantanassa). In general, it may be observed that the western elements that infiltrated the art of Mystras, mainly in the 15th century, did so in filtered form (Pallas 1987, pp. 31, 39 passim, Mouriki 1991, pp. 226ff.).

Another form of art, manuscript illumination, was also practised at Mystras, where the copying of codices flourished during the final centuries of the empire. Copyists such as Manuel Tzykandyles, who copied the illuminated manuscript Par. Gr. 135 containing the Story of Job at Mystras in 1362 (Velmans 1967, pp. 209-235), worked alongside miniaturists. The work of the anonymous painter of the above manuscript demonstrates that some of them were familiar with the expressive means used by medieval western European miniaturists, whose influences were felt both on their style and on their iconographic vocabulary.

Although Byzantine art retained its own personality and borrowings were confined to individual elements, the Byzantines' understanding of the aspirations of western art and the different stance they adopted on aesthetic matters at the beginning of the 15th century, are imprinted in documents of the period.

The description by the emperor Manuel II Palaiologos of a western painting of

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ΙΣ
ΧΣ

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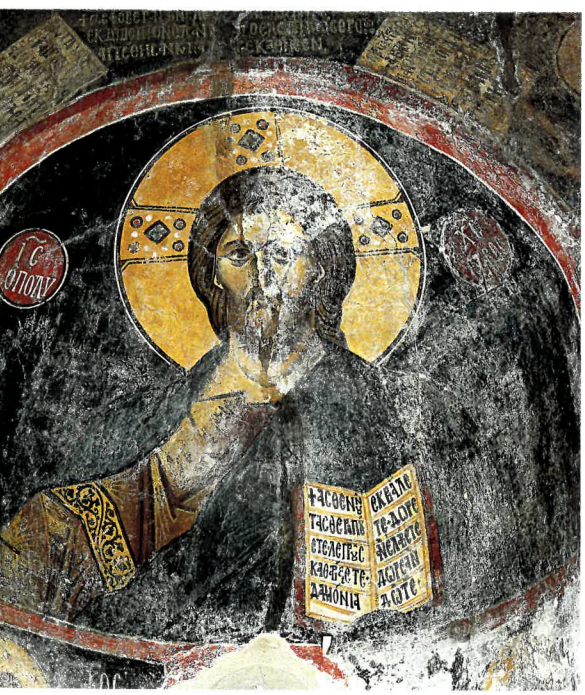


177. Mosaics. Chora Monastery. Constantinople. 1315-1320.

178. Christ the Merciful. Wall-painting. 1270-1285. Mystras, Hagios Demetrios.

179. Christ and the Samaritan Woman. Wall-painting. circa 1315. Mystras, Hodegetria.

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Spring shows an appreciation not only of the accuracy of the rendering of nature, that is, the naturalist style that had no place in Byzantine religious painting, but also of the depiction of the nude body, which was acceptable as a means of artistic expression: the parts of the body that should be concealed, do not strike one as naked. *(PG 156, 580, Pallas 1965, pp. 320-322).*

The aesthetic views of John Eugenikos, a cultural figure directly connected with the history of Mystras (Zakythinos 1975, vol. II, p. 336), are further evidence for the obligation on the artist to depict the objective reality of things as perceived by the senses (Pallas 1965, pp. 320-322).

EM.B.-P.K.

27 Proskynetarion with Christ enthroned

Second half of the 14th century

Marble with inlaid wax and mastic, paint and gold

0.97×0.74×0.13 m.

Found in second use in the south side narthex of the Peribleptos and taken to Mystras Museum

Mystras Museum, inv. no. 1166, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

Christ on the throne of the Pantokrator, holding a closed Gospel Book and one hand extended in blessing, is a depiction of the Incarnation of the Word of God, a condensation of the essence of Christian doctrine.

The lavishly decorated throne and the figure of Christ are cramped beneath a semicircular arch in high relief with an open-work scroll, supported on twin colonnettes with an *amma* (knot) and specially formed bases. At the bottom, the straight border is decorated with champlevé palmette scrolls that cross to form confronted heart shapes with a trefoil palmette. In the middle of the border is preserved the upper half of a braided cross in low relief, with loops at the ends of the arms and a square at the centre.

Christ is rendered in a combination of engraving and champlevé, with his face and the slightly hollowed halo executed in low relief and the throne in champlevé. The removal of the background and the addition of *ceromastic* (wax and mastic) and also gold, attested by laboratory examination at a number of points, gave the work its final appearance, in which a major role was played by the painterly media. This eclectic amalgam of different elements results in a certain affectation which is known to have been characteristic of similar relief works of the Palaiologan period.

The decorative repertoire of the relief also contains elements that reveal a thematic and stylistic affinity with late 13th-early 14th century monuments. The braided arch in high relief also occurs in *proskynetaria* at Mystras, such as the one in the Metropolis, dating from about the end of the 13th century, and that in the Peribleptos, of the 14th century (Millet 1910, pl. 43.2 and 49.1). The confronted heart-shapes and the champlevé palmette scrolls are also to be found in the decoration of the 14th century relief of the Ascension of Alexander the Great, and in other sculptures in the Peribleptos (Millet 1910, pl. 49.2, and *passim,* and Louvi 1980, pp. 138ff.), in the church of the Koimesis at Apidia in Lakonia, at the end of the 13th century (Orlandos 1935, pp. 131-132, fig. 6), and also in champlevé cornices in the south church of the Lips Monastery in Constantinople (1282-1304) (Macridy 1964, fig. 62, 63). Finally, the quatrefoils on the backrest of Christ's throne are already somewhat removed from forms occurring in reliefs of the 12th and 13th century, and they have pointed edges that were to become even sharper in the sculptural decoration of the Evangelistria at Mystras, in the early 15th century (Millet 1910, pl. 57.9).

The iconographic type of Christ with his right hand extended in blessing is a rare iconographic feature that distinguishes the Christ of Mystras from the usual type of the enthroned Pantokrator holding his right hand in front of his breast in blessing. It may be considered to derive from the full-length depiction of Christ on domes which, as has been noted, reflects the influence of the Ascension as found in 12th century monuments, such as the church of Hagios Hierotheos at Megara (end of the 1170s) and the Martorana in Sicily (1143-1151). There is also an interesting example in the dome of San Marco in Venice (1180-1190).

The large head of Christ is turned imperceptibly to the left and exudes tranquillity and spirituality, which is not disturbed by the contrapposto produced by the slight turn of the body to the right. The breadth and volume of the body is well displayed by the rich, curving drapery around the waist, belly and thighs. This dynamic quality of the figure should, of course, be taken together with the final appearance of the work, with its inlaid materials and colours. The Classical reminiscences noted in the relief already reveal a distancing from the manneristic extremes and the emotional climate of the 12th century. An example closely akin to the Christ of Mystras is the mosaic of Christ enthroned in the apse of the Pammakaristos monastery in Constantinople (circa 1310). Interesting "imperial" examples of Christ enthroned are preserved in Constantinople in the mosaics of the church of the Pammakaristos and the Chora monastery, which are works of Palaiologan art dating from the first half of the 14th century associated with the ideology of imperial authority. These will have served as models also in the second half of the 14th century.

The dominating double presence of the larger than life size depictions of Christ



enthroned in the apse and the south-east chapel of Hagia Sophia at Mystras reflect precisely this return to earlier models. It is particularly important since the church has been identified with the monastery of the Christ Zoodotes, erected after the middle of the 14th century by the first despot, Manuel Kantakouzenos, son of the emperor John VI.
The unprecedented placing of a *fleur-de-lis* on the sleeve of Christ's right arm is a western element whose repeated occurrence is a characteristic feature of the Peribleptos. It enables the *proskynetarion* of Christ to be associated with this church, where it was found in second use, since in the Peribleptos the *fleur-de-lis* is found in both external and internal decorative sculptures (see Louvi 1980, pp. 138ff.). The church dates after the middle of the 14th century, and is regarded by scholars as probably the work of Manuel Kantakouzenos and his wife Isabella, a daughter of the Frankish Lusignan family of Cyprus.
The twin transcendental portraits of Christ in Hagia Sophia, and Christ enthroned on the *proskynetarion*, the only sculptural depiction of a holy person on the site of Mystras, represent interesting choices.
They should be associated with the aristocratic aspirations preferred by the family of the Kantakouzenoi, and also with the Christ-centred mysticism of the Hesychast Movement at this period. John VI presided over and signed
the decisions of the Councils of Constantinople, which vindicated Hesychasm, in 1341 and 1351, the first of which was attended by the metropolitan bishop of Lakedaimonia, Neilos. The western influences discernible in the Peribleptos and the *proskynetarion* of Christ may also be interpreted in terms of the good diplomatic relations maintained with the West by Manuel, who contracted a marriage with a western noblewoman, in conformity with the requirements of the period of "dialogue" between Byzantium and the West.

Publications: Brehier 1973, p. 66, pl. XV. Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art 1986, pp. 30-32, no. 18, fig. 18. Byzantine Art 1964, p. 94. Grabar, vol. II, 1976, pp. 155-156, no. 166, pl. CXXVII. Louvi 1980, pp. 160ff., pl. CXIX. Libri di Pietra 1999, pp. 62-63. Millet 19210, pl. 51, 11.

EM.B.

28 Two funerary slabs of Kantakouzenos Palaiologos, probably from a pseudo-sarcophagus

Last quarter of the 14th century

Grey marble, probably from a quarry on Mount Parnon

a) Slab dimensions 1,33×0,57×0,10 (greatest 0,12) m.

b) Part of a slab consisting of three joining pieces: 1) 0,57×0,43×0,10 m.,

2) 0,35×0,30×0,10 m., 3) 0,30×0,26×0,10 m.

Mystras archaeological site. a) The first slab was found in second use in the chapel of the Hypapande to the south-west of the Pantanassa. b) Of the second slab, piece no 1 was found in second use in the staircase of the Pantanassa and no. 2 was found in Hagia Sophia

Mystras Museum, inv. no. a) 1772, b) 418, 662, 1213, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

The surviving pieces form two marble funerary slabs with the same decoration on the main side.
The slab preserved in a single piece, which is broken away at the bottom, corresponds with the long side of a pseudo-sarcophagus, while the second slab, made up of three pieces, will have been its lid. The first slab has a vertical groove 0.16 m. wide, on the back, running the full length of one side. A second, horizontal groove 0.8 m. wide, can be seen on part of the upper long side. Part of a groove is also preserved on the bottom long side. Finally, there is a vertical notch near the left edge of the slab.
The main side of each slab has a broad border, beneath which it is divided into three panels decorated in the champlevé technique. In the central panel is a stepped base that recalls the hill of Golgotha, on which stands a Latin cross with the arms ending in trefoils, the base of which is bordered by winding floral scrolls ending in semi-palmettes. The upper spaces of the arms are filled with roundels. The two square side panels have inscribed medallions containing the Kantakouzenos monogram. In diagonally opposite corners of the panels are the Palaiologos monograms and a design of four rods intersecting to form a cross, each design executed twice.
The rear of the larger slab is undecorated, while the smaller one is worked on both sides. Its back is also divided into three panels, the central of which is occupied by the motif of the foliate cross in champlevé, while the left panel has an engraved Maltese cross and the right a six-point star-pattern.
Some of the features of these slabs, such as the division of the surface into panels, the decoration with motifs of symbolic content, the proportions of the dimensions, and above all their low height, all suggest that they were funerary slabs, probably belonging to the front and lid of a pseudo-sarcophagus.
The prominent position accorded to the foliate cross in the central panel, in particular, is very common in funerary monuments, representing the anticipation of the resurrection of the deceased and being also a means of protecting the tomb. Finally, other funerary slabs have decoration on the back, amongst them the covering slab of Agne Villehardouin, dating from 1286 (Pazaras 1988, no. 64, pp. 48 and 115 and pl. 52). The difference in length between the two slabs recalls examples in which the lid of the pseudo-sarcophagus rests either on a chamfered cornice, or on a projection built into the walls.
A Kantakouzenos monogram similar to the one on these slabs is to be found in a monument of great importance in the history of Mystras, the church of Hagia Sophia. This has been identified by



scholars (Zakythinos 1975, vol. I, p. 105 and II, p. 195, Chatzidakis 1993, p. 69, Sinos 1999, col. 430-433) with the church of Christ Zoodotes, built according to the literary sources (Miklosich-Müller, 1860-1890, vol. I, pp. 472-474) by the first despot of Mystras, Manuel Kantakouzenos. The inscription [ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ ΚΑΝΤΑΚΟΥ-ΖΗΝΟΣ] (the despot Kantakouzenos) and double-headed eagles are preserved on two impost blocks in the church (Millet 1899, pp. 142-143 and Id. 1910, pl. 56.5, 6, 8). Manuel was the second son of the emperor John VI Kantakouzenos, a very wealthy aristocrat of the period who was himself the son of Theodora Palaiologina. The learned emperor is depicted in 14th century miniatures in the codex Gr. 1242 in the National Library of France (Laïou 1980, p.153, Anastos 1980, p. 377), which contains theological treatises written by the emperor himself. He is shown standing on a purple cushion with two double-headed eagles and the inscription [ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ] "Ioannes" and with the two epithets Kantakouzenos and Palaiologos. These epithets were presumably also used by his son Manuel, whose mother Irene Asen Palaiologina was herself a descendent of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos. A now lost slab from a fountain at Mystras, which was drawn by Fourmont, bore the inscription [ΕΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ] (Emanuel the Despot), the Kantakouzenos and Palaiologos monograms, and a coat-of-arms with a lion (Millet 1899, p. 146). The monogram of ΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ ΚΑΝΤΑΚΟΥΖΗΝΟΣ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣ="Manuel despot Kantakouzenos Palaiologos" is also inscribed on a communion chalice known as the jasper in the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos (Loverdou-Tsigarida 1996, pp. 475-477, fig. 420-25). The monogram of the Palaiologoi, the pattern of crossed rods, and the six-point star, found together on the funerary slabs from Mystras, are motifs found on coins issued by the Palaiologoi, mainly from the time of Andronikos II on (Bendall – Donald, 1979, *passim*).

Crossed rods, as found along with the Palaiologos monogram on part of a 14th century ciborium from the Serai bridge in Constantinople (Makridis 1931, p. 337, fig. 8), have been associated with the Palaiologos family. They occur on

the same monument as another design, the swastika, what is also to be found on a sarcophagus slab from the Lips monastery in Constantinople together with an inscription associated with the family of the Palaiologoi, and probably to Theodora, wife of Michael VIII Palaiologos (Mango – Hawkins 1968, pp. 180-181). It has been noted that these designs are not simply decorative motifs, as used to be believed, since they are found on the funeral cloth of Maria Mangop just after 1477, together with the monogram of the Palaiologoi (Johnstone 1967, p. 112, fig. 79-80).
In conclusion, designs found along with monograms may be regarded as "coats-of-arms" of the imperial families of the Late Byzantine period. Though they differed from those commonly found in the West, they served the same purpose, to denote the presence and continuity of the family.
It seems reasonable to suppose that the repertoire on the funerary slabs from Mystras is not coincidental, and that all the elements were associated with the families of the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi. Although there is no reference to the name Manuel on the slabs, the combination of the two epithets, the fact that they are also found in combination in the other examples mentioned above, the similarity of the rendering of the monograms on the pseudo-sarcophagus with those in Hagia Sophia and on the Vatopedi communion chalice, and the relationship of Manuel to the site at Mystras are strong indications that the pseudo-sarcophagus should be associated with the first despot of Mystras, who ruled the semi-independent despotate of the Morea from 1349 to 1380.
He was *experienced in matters, of good counsel* and a powerful despot with considerable administrative acumen, who made some shrewd diplomatic moves. He successfully dealt with the continuous revolts of powerful local toparchs, and pursued a successful foreign policy, winning over the principate of Achaia, maintaining good relations with the Catholic Church, and marrying a descendant of the Lusignans of Cyprus, Isabella, the daughter of Guy de Lusignan, the king of Lesser Armenia. Manuel died in 1380 at Mystras, where he was buried (Zakythinos 1975, vol. I, pp. 95-133).
In 1365, *according to the wish of the most fortunate despot... Manuel Kantakouzenos*, the church of Christ Zoodotes was converted into a monastery directly dependent on the Patriarchate. It was deliberately kept independent of the local ecclesiastical administration and was presumably at the same time a Palace church (Miklosich-Müller 1860-1890, vol. I, p. 473). There is evidence in the literary sources for the burial in it of members of the ruling class, such as Cleopa Malatesta, and the removal to it of the remains of Theodora Tocco, both of whom were wives of despots of Mystras (Maisano 1990, pp. 68, 72). The burial of members of the aristocracy in the katholika of monasteries founded by them was very common in Palaiologan times.





Publications: Millet 1899, pp. 141-142. Id. 1910, pl. 58, 11 and 14. Yiatrakou, p. 45.

EM. B

29 Templon architrave block, broken into two, with the monogram ΖΑΜΠΕΑ ΝΤΕ ΛΕΖΗΝΑΩ

Second half of the 14th century

Grey marble, probably from a quarry on Mount Parnon

a) length 0.475, width 0.21, height 0.19 m.

b) length 0.565, width 0.21, height 0.19 m.

Mystras archaeological site. Found near the enclosure wall of the Metropolis

Mystras Museum, inv. no. a) 1207, b) 1208, 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities

On the front, chamfered surface of the architrave block, a bipartite floral scroll terminating in turning ends fills the space, intertwining and forming three circles with braided decorative motifs between them. Arranged in a cross in the circle on the left is the monogram ΖΑΜΠΕΑ, with ΝΤΕ ΛΕΖΗΝΑΩ in the circle on the right; the central circle has a heraldic lion with a Jerusalem cross to its right.

The braided ornament at either end of the architrave block has been identified with the lemniskos motif (Boura 1980, pp. 107-108), found already in mosaic floors of the Early Christian period, and commonly used in the sculpture of Middle and Late Byzantine times also in regions of the Peloponnese, as in churches in Mani. It is also found in sculptures of Mystras, on the templon in the Peribleptos and in the Metropolis (Millet 1910, *passim*).

The architrave is a local product with elements characteristic of the art of the second half of the 14th century, including the scroll forming the decoration in low relief, in which limited use was made of the drill, and the monograms and coat-of-arms executed in champlevé, involving the removal of material: in these, the background would have been filled with a different material, possibly *ceromastic* (wax and mastic), and also with paint (normally blue and red), while use was probably also made of metal –gold or silver– as was common in Western coats-of-arms.

The coat-of-arms has been identified with that of the Lusignans of Cyprus, which consists of a heraldic lion and the cross of Jerusalem, formed of a central Maltese cross with flaring arms and four smaller crosses in the spaces between the arms. On a Cypriot piastre depicting King Eric II and the governor Amalrich (1306-1310), the Jerusalem cross appears on the obverse and the heraldic lion on the reverse (Iakovou 1944, p. 66, no. 14) and on one issued by Amalrich (1306-1310) the Lusignan coat-of-arms appears on the reverse, with the two motifs now combined (Iakovou 1944, p. 6, pl. XIII, no. 16).

The Byzantine imperial families made use of emblems from at least the second half of the 13th century on, though the use of coats-of-arms in the form that finally crystallised in the feudal West in the 12th century is not found in the Byzantine empire. In the final two centuries of the empire, particularly after the period of Frankish rule, the Byzantines were influenced by the widespread use of escutcheons and



coats-of-arms by the rulers of the Latin states created on the conquered Byzantine territories.
The name on the architrave from Mystras may be identified with Isabella de Lusignan, wife of the first despot of Mystras, Manuel, son of the emperor John VI Kantakouzenos. Isabella, the daughter of the ruler of Cyprus Guy de Lusignan, who became king of Minor Armenia, and of Maria Bourbon, maintained close ties with the Lusignan family on Cyprus. Cypriot literary sources state that her uncle, Peter I, the king of Cyprus, visited the despotate, and Isabella herself, after her husband's death, was entertained as a guest in Cyprus.
The recording of the name and the depiction of the coat-of-arms of a woman of western descent at a Mystras architrave is unusual and of great interest. Isabella was a dynamic figure, whose presence, combined with the foreign-policy initiatives taken by her husband, was a factor in the good relations between the despotate and the Franks of the Peloponnese and the Catholic Church. She seems to have followed the custom of the period and changed her name to Maria, by which she is referred to in an inscription in Hagios Georgios at Longaniko, as the spouse of the despot Manuel Kantakouzenos. The Mystras architrave, however, refers to her as [ΖΑΜΠΕΑ], presumably a popular rendering of her name by the local inhabitants. After her husband's death in 1380, her presence on Rhodes is noted in the literary sources. She probably died between 1382 and 1387, away from Mystras (Zakythinos 1975, vol. I, pp. 97ff. and Id. 1936, pp. 62ff.).

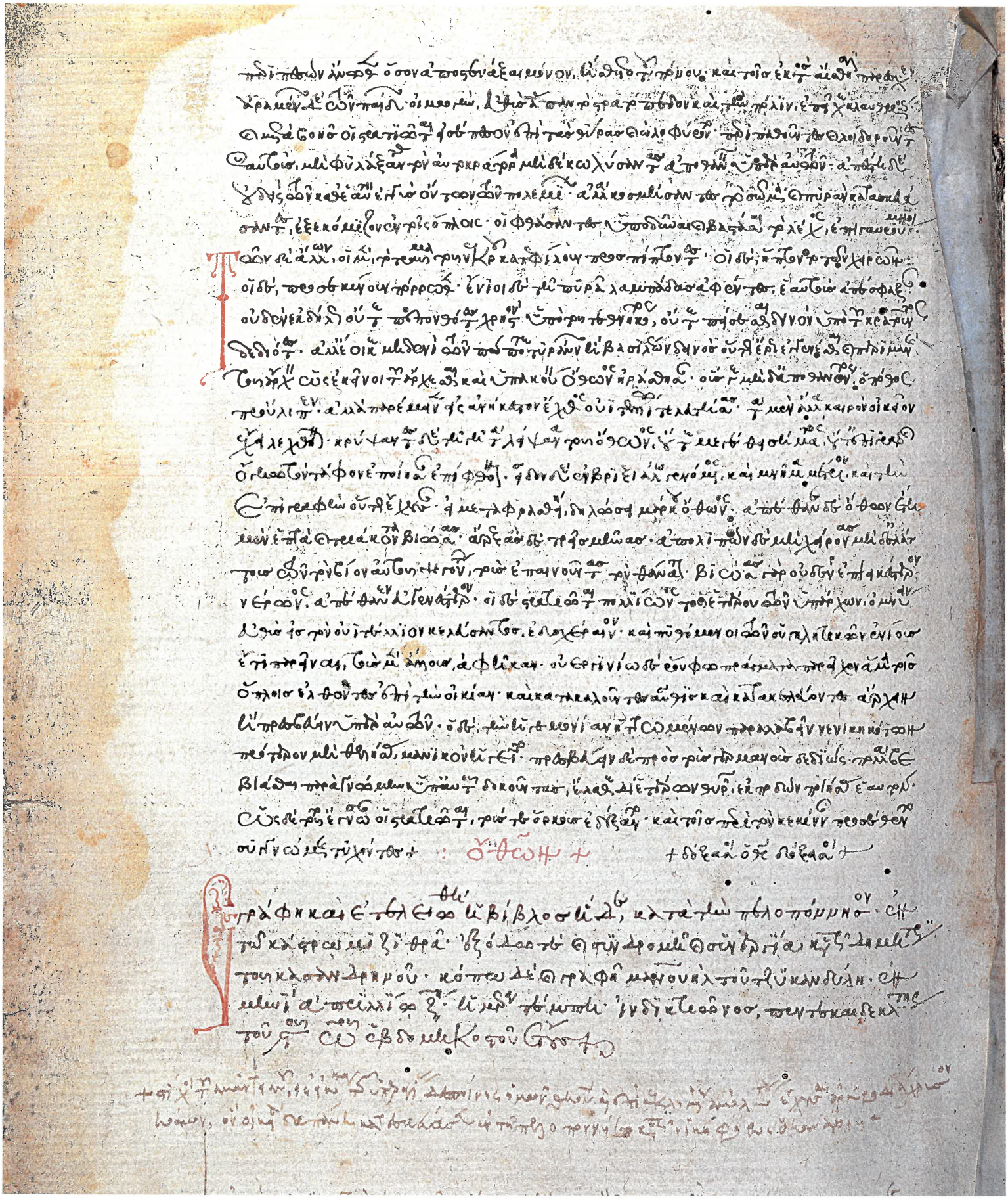
Publications: Millet 1906, pp. 453-459. Id. 1910, p. 9, pl. 58, nos. 1 and 3.

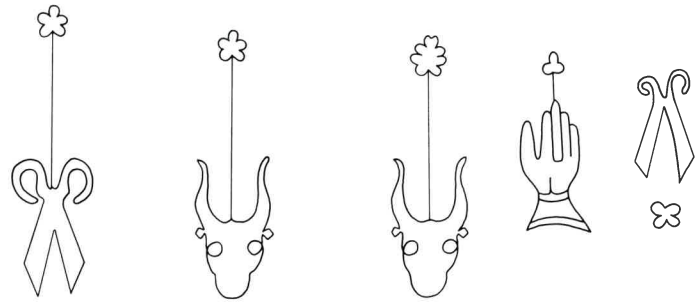
EM.B.

30 Codex D 538 inf. of the Ambrosian Library

Manuscript codex
AD 1362
Paper
398×187 mm.
Fol. 311 (IV + 306 + I)
Single column with 33 lines per page
Minuscule script
Contents: (fol. I-305) Plutarch, Parallel Lives (fol. 305-306) seven Byzantine epigrams by the archiatros Constantine Amanteianos and George Kydones
Milan, Ambrosian Library

Codex D 538 inf. of the Ambrosian Library is the second part of an originally larger volume devoted to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. The first part (Canonici Greek 63) is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Turyn 1980, pp. 129-130).
It was written at Mystras by the well-known manuscript copyist Manuel Tzykandyles in the year 6870 from the creation of the world (AD 1362), with the financial support of Demetrios Kasandrenos. This information is derived from an inscription at the end of the text: *This book was written and completed in the Peloponnese in the castle of Myzethra at the expense and with the contribution and cooperation of master Demetrios Kasandrenos, and with the toil and script of Manuel Tzykandyles, in the month of April, on the seventh day, Thursday, fifteenth indiction, of the Sw seventieth year +..*
Demetrios Kasandrenos of Thessalonike was a descendant of an old Macedonian aristocratic family and was looked upon by his contemporaries as one of the most important notables of Constantinople, and the "wonder of the senate" (Lambros 1907, p. 168). He was a member of the intellectual circle surrounding the emperor John VI Kantakouzenos. In the year 1361, the latter visited Mystras as the monk Joasaph. He was accompanied by Kasandrenos, who took up residence in the city and died there shortly afterwards as the monk Daniel.
The epigrams by Constantine Amanteianos and George Kydones were added later by two copyists, as may be concluded from the two different styles of script used (Turyn 1972, p. 229). It is apparent from their content that the epigrams were probably added at the request of Nikephoros Angelos Kan<n>abes or his wife Maria Kasandrene Kan<n>abina, the daughter of Demetrios Kasandrenos (Turyn 1972, p. 229). Maria Kasandrene Kanabina was a patron of the Brondocheion Monastery at Mystras and the Manganon Monastery in Constantinople (Kazhdan 1991, p. 1109). Nikephoros Kanabes is known from the codex Par. Gr. 47, which he commissioned from the Manganon Monastery in Constantinople and then presented to the Monastery of Christ Zoodotes at Mystras, and which contains ecclesiastical writings (Lambros 1907, p. 169).
Manuel Tzykandyles belonged to an old aristocratic Byzantine family, many members of which distinguished themselves in high offices in the Byzantine administration. The first mention of the name occurs in the 11th century. Various versions of it are found in the literary sources: Tzykandeles, Tzykandyles, Tzikandeles, Tzykandales, Kykandeles, Atzikanteles (Polemis 1968, pp. 186-187).
Manuel Tzykandyles' activity as a manuscript copyist may be set at Mystras and Constantinople in the third quarter of the 14th century. He, too, belonged to the intellectual circles around the emperor John VI Kantakouzenos, and also those associated with the emperor's son Manuel, despot of the Morea. Tzykandyles lived and worked in Mystras during the period 1362-1372. Eight codices have survived from this period, six of them the work of Tzykandyles alone and the other two executed in collaboration with other scribes who lived and worked in the region. These manuscripts contain ecclesiastical writings and works of ancient Greek literature (Vogel – Gardthausen 1909, pp. 281-282).





Watermark of codex 44 (drawing by Angeliki Stamatelopoulou).

He then settled and worked in Constantinople, where he had probably lived also before 1362. Two of his personal codices have survived from these two periods. A third manuscript (Vat. Gr. 609), which was completed in collaboration with the scholar Demetrios Kydones, probably belongs to the same period and contains a Greek translation of the *Summa theologica, pars prima,* of Thomas Aquinas (Vogel – Gardthausen 1909, pp. 281-282, Turyn 1972, pp. 231-232, Nicol 1968, p. 128). The translation of this work was by Demetrios Kydones himself and is also contained in the codex Gr. 146 (collocazione 1043) in the Marcian Library, which was written by Tzykandyles in collaboration with two other scribes.
Demetrios Kydones (1315/20-1400), who was also a minister of the emperor John VI Kantakouzenos, is one of the most important Byzantine scholars of the Late Byzantine period. He was a supporter of intellectual and religious rapprochement between East and West and had to his credit many Greek translations of Latin theologians. His activity may be seen in the context of the scholars who prepared the ground for the western Renaissance (Tatakis 1977, pp. 248-250). The two men were probably also linked by close ties of friendship. In a letter to the emperor, Kydones refers to a friend "Tzykandyles". Lambros considers it probable that this person is to be identified with Manuel Tzykandyles (Lambros 1907, p. 171), a view supported by the fact that they collaborated on the composition of the manuscript Vat. Gr. 609. The above suggests that Tzykandyles probably had an interest in western philosophical thought and the possibility of a rapprochement between Byzantium and the West. In this context, it may perhaps have been no coincidence that, to illustrate another of his known manuscripts, Par. Gr.135, which was also copied at Mystras and is now in the National Library of France, Tzykandyles chose miniatures that followed western styles and iconographic models (Velmans 1967, pp. 209-235).
Manuel Tzykandyles' presence and activity at Mystras are directly connected with the intense intellectual activity in this region from as early as the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century. The sphere of manuscript copying appears to have been very productive. Part of this output of manuscripts was due to secular scholars, whether or not of aristocratic descent, such as the jurist Basilakes (late 13th c.), Manuel Tzykandyles, Nikolaos Boullotes of Agala (middle of the 15th c.), Charitonymos Ermonymos (middle of the 15th c.), and others. Alongside these, church officials and ordinary clerics were also active as copyists in the area of Mystras: Nicholas (Nikolaos) Malotaras (early 14th c.), John (Ioannes) Chandakenos (first half of the 15th c.). Nicholas (Nikolaos) Lemenites (first half of the 15th c.), John (Ioannes) Karianites (first half of the 15th c.), and so on (Lambros 1907).

Publications: Lambros 1907, pp. 167-172. Turyn 1972, pp. 229-231, pl. 183-184, 243b. Id. 1980, pp. 129-130, pl. 122a.

P.P.

31 Codex 44 of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta

Tetraevangelon
14th century
Watermarked paper
210x140 mm.
Fol. 185
Single-column with 20-21 or 29 lines per page
Minuscule script
Content: the four Gospels
Provenance: Monastery of the Hagioi Tessarakonta
Manuscript collection of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta

The codex contains the texts of the four Gospels and a *Synaxarion of the Gospels for the entire year containing the akolouthia for every week.* With the exception of the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospels are prefaced by two-column lists of the chapters they contain and the epigrams of the Evangelists. The binding of the codex consists of wooden tablets that were once covered with leather. The spine has been destroyed.
The manuscript is the work of three copyists, each of them having a meticulous hand. Use was made of black and red ink. The headpieces of the Gospels are in majusucle. The manuscript is adorned by elaborate rectangular headpieces with scrolling decoration inside them and with floral initial letters at the beginning of each Gospel. Also of note are the three miniature depictions of the Evangelists Mark, Luke and John contained in the codex. Luke is shown in bust at the bottom of the page, while Mark and John, who were originally depicted from the thighs up, are now full-length

figures, thanks to later additions. The representations are clumsy, executed in their original form by the same miniaturist, who was probably one of the three scribes who worked on the codex, a practice also to be observed in other Byzantine manuscripts.
The most famous illuminated manuscript copied at Mystras, in 1362, is the *Book of Job* (Par. Gr. 135, Paris, National Library), copied by Manuel Tzykandyles, who was active in this region in the decade 1362-1372 (Omont 1881, pp. 17-18).
The name of the miniaturist is not known, and he is possibly to be identified with the copyist (Velmans 1967, pp. 210-213, 232-233, Mouriki 1995, p. 480).

The characteristic features of the Paris codex are the use of bold lines and outlines for the figures, the treatment of the facial features and the drapery of the garments worn by the figures. Although similar stylistic elements can be identified in codex 44 of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta, the copying of which goes back to about the same period and is probably due to a scriptorium in the region of Mystras, the quality and wealth of illustrations in the work of Tzykandyles make it impossible to compare the two.
Codex 44, which follows the Byzantine tradition and is one of the few illuminated manuscripts associated with Lakonia, nonetheless makes an important contribution towards completing the picture of the copying activities of the period.



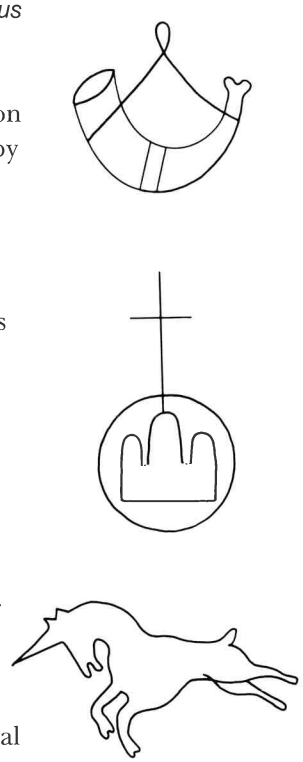
Publications: Bees 1904, pp. 35-36.

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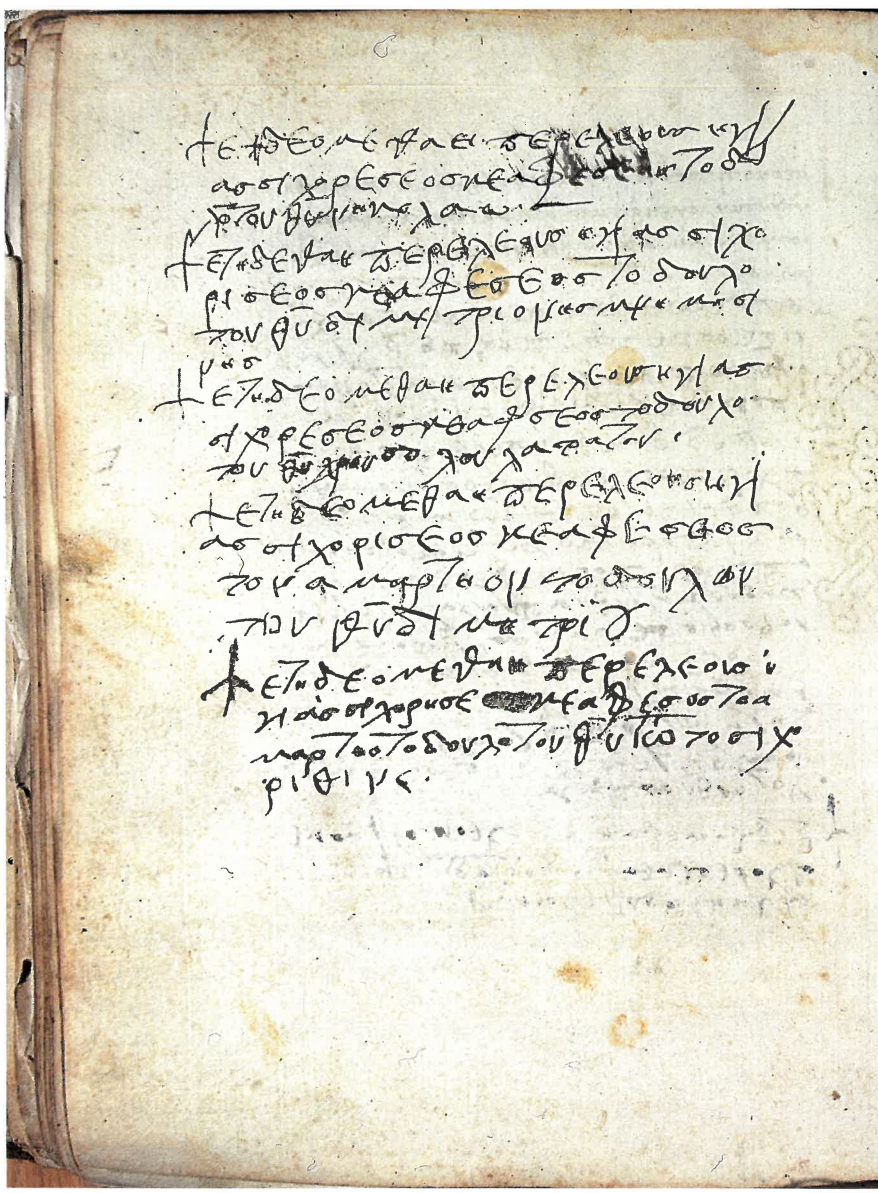
32 Codex 5 of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta

Manuscript codex
AD 1432
Watermarked paper
235x170 mm.
Fol. 376
Single-column with 23 lines per page
Minuscule script
Contents: New Testament, lacking the Revelation of St John
Provenance: Monastery of Hagioi Tessarakonta Lakedaimonos
Manuscript collection of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta

The first folios of the codex contain four texts relating to the reading of the Gospels and the church calendar, with the following titles: a) *Statement of the reading of the Gospels over the year and the akolouthia of the Evangelists* (fol. 1-4a-5b); b) *Statement of the gospel passages prescribed to be read every day* (fol. 6a-9b); c) *Synaxarion of the twelve months* (fol. 10a-17b); d) *Akolouthia of saints for various months* (fol. 18a-19a).
There follows the text of the New Testament, not including the Revelation of St John. The Gospels are prefaced by lists of the chapters contained in them and the epigrams of the Evangelists. The Epistles are all preceded by a statement of their theme.
The binding of the manuscript consists of wooden tablets covered with silk velvet fabric, the colour of which has deteriorated. They originally also had repousse silver medallions (Bees 1904, p. 10). The spine is preserved, slightly damaged.
The script is meticulous and bears witness to an outstanding calligrapher. It is embellished with red initials. The script of the headpieces of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles is in gold majuscule characters. The initial letter of each book takes the form of a stylised branch and is also gold.
An inscription at the end of the text names the scribe Sophronios and dates the codex to 1432 (6940 from the creation of the world): *+The gift of God and the toil of Sophronios. In the year ϛ ϡ μ: indiction j, month of June 30+*
There are handwritten notes added on some of the pages, giving information about the various owners and dedicators of the manuscript. At the beginning of the 16th century the codex was purchased by one Loukas. After his death, the noblewoman Laskarina, who was probably a relative (his daughter or wife) dedicated it to the church of the Panagia ton Ouranon in 1542.
The noblewoman Laskarina probably belonged to the old aristocratic family of the Laskarids (11th century onwards), some of whose members distinguished themselves in middle-ranking and senior offices of the Byzantine state machinery and even became emperors (empire of Nicaea) (Kazhdan – Cutler 1991 A, p. 1180). Some members of this family settled at Mystras during the period of the despotate and filled important offices: Matthew Palaiologos Laskaris (first half of the 15th century) (Lambros 1907, p. 183), Manuel Laskaris the Chatzikes (†1445, portrait in the narthex of the Pantanassa), Alexios Laskaris, head of Old Patras (middle of the 15th century (Nicol 1992, p. 27).
A few years later, in 1565, the manuscript was presented to the church of the Panagia ton Ouranon by Moskos, son of Michael Stabaras. The most recent note in the codex tells us of a



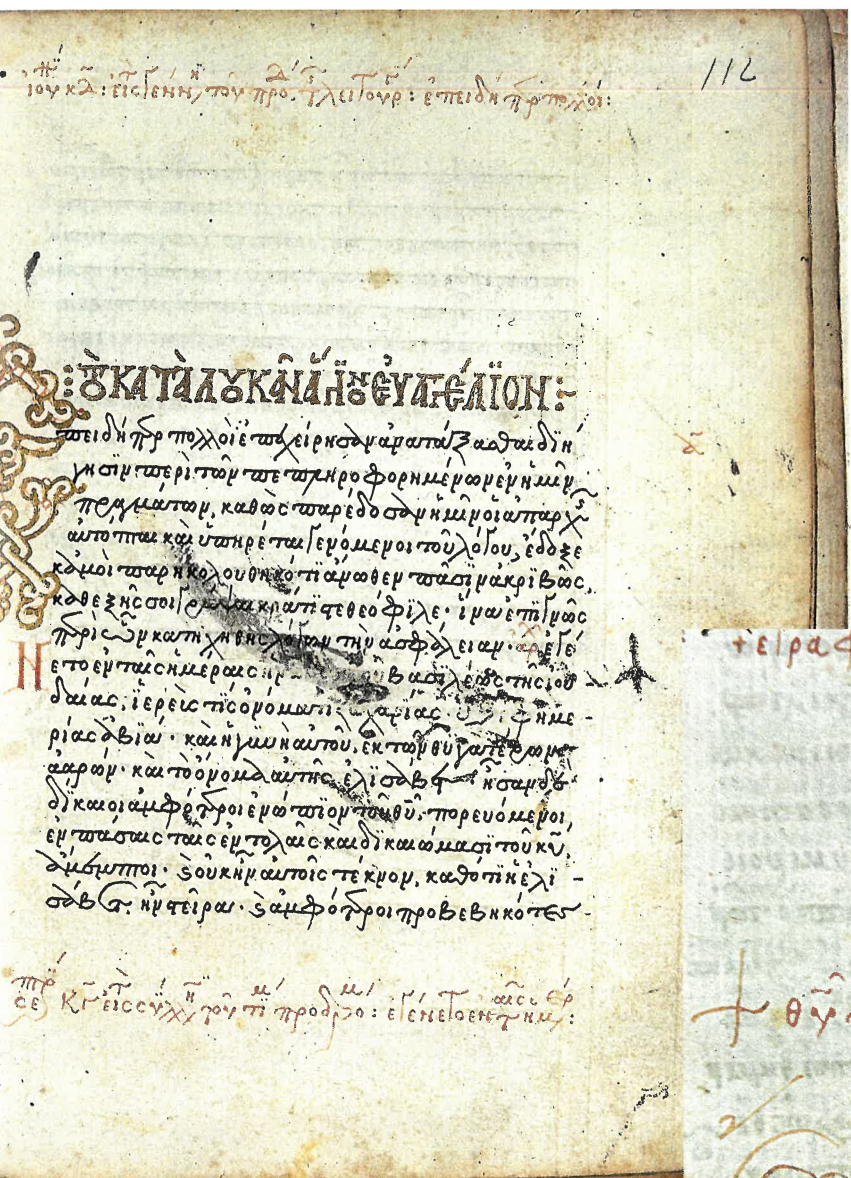
Watermark of codex 5 (drawing by Angeliki Stamatelopoulou).

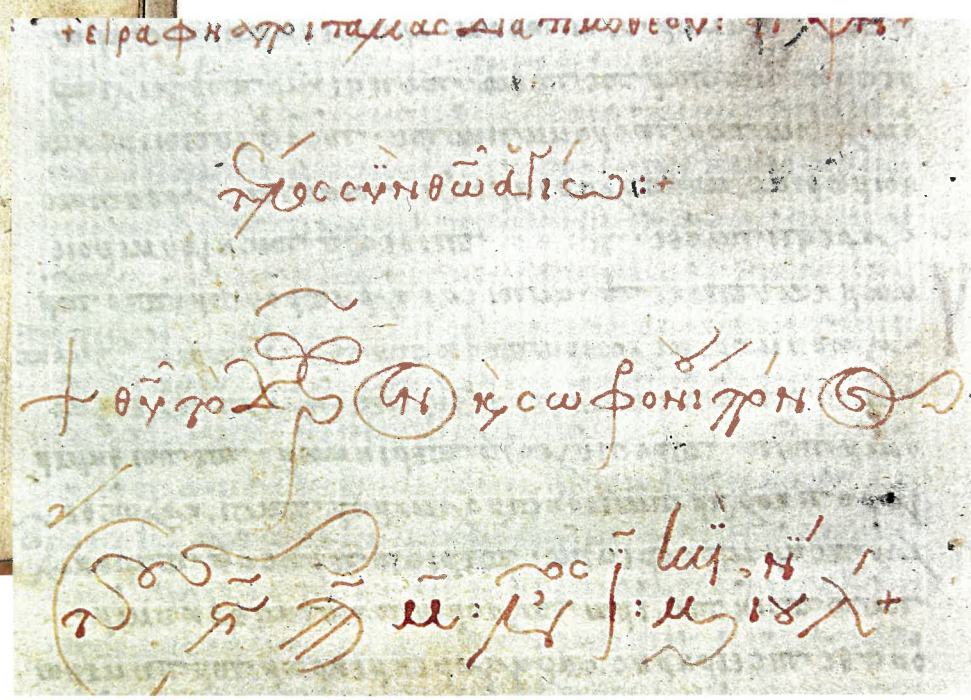


visit by the priest Zacharias *serphiotes* (probably indicating that he came from Seriphos) to the church in question on 27 April 1794. The other notes refer to names and make supplication on their behalf. The last owner of the codex was the Hagion Tessarakonta Monastery (Forty Martyrs).

It is not clear whether the codex was the product of a local scriptorium or whether it was brought to Lakedaimonia at a later point in its life. The only piece of information given by the scribe about himself is his name: Sophronios. What is certain is that the presence of this manuscript in Lakedaimonia is to be associated with the general intellectual flowering of this region at the time of the Palaiologoi. It was also very probably the work of a local scriptorium that was probably part of a monastery complex, judging by the name of the copyist.

The copying tradition of the Peloponnese is known to have gone back to the 11th and 12th century (Tselikas 1987-8, pp. 486-498). The output of manuscripts was particularly intensive during the Late Byzantine period, reaching a climax at the time of the despotate of the Morea. The existence is known from the literary sources of large private and church libraries, and of the functioning of scriptoria, mainly within monasteries (Lambros 1907, pp. 152-187). This activity should be seen against the general background of the intellectual flowering noted in the despotate, and is characteristic of the final centuries of the Byzantine empire. Many names are known of copyists active in the region, especially at Mystras: Basilakes the jurist (late 13th c.), Manuel Tzykandyles (second half of the 14th c.), Nikephoros Doukas Palaiologos Malakes (early 15th c.), John (Ioannes) Dokeianos (middle of the 15th c.), Nicholas (Nikolaos) Boullotes of Agala (middle of the 15th c.), Nicholas (Nikolaos) Mellachrenos (middle of the 15th c.) and others (Lambros 1907, pp. 152-187). There was thus already a copying tradition in the region, with a significant output of manuscripts, to which codex 5 is probably to be assigned.





Publications: Bees 1904, pp. 9-10.
Sakellaropoulos 1998, vol. I, pp. 265-267.

P.P.

BYZANTINE INTELLECTUALS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON WESTERN THOUGHT

During the final centuries of the life of Byzantium, when the state machinery was in decline and the empire contracting, artistic and intellectual activity was in full bloom, to the degree that we may speak of a true renaissance (Svoronos 1987, p. 142), which foreshadowed and prepared the ground for the western Renaissance that followed (Nikolopoulos 1980, p. 390).

The basic features of Byzantine thought –a distinct turn towards the study of the Greek Classics and at the same time a tendency for philosophical speculation to become independent of the Church– can be discerned in intellectual life from as early as the time of Psellos (11th c.) and his successors (Benakis 1980, p. 348).

The men of letters who lived and were active during the period between the two captures of Constantinople, in 1204 and 1453, enjoyed the patronage of the Byzantine emperors and studied the Greek and Latin Classics, in a desire to familiarise themselves not only with the language but also with the principles and virtues described in them (Vryonis 1967, pp. 178-183). They endeavoured to interpret, annotate and translate the Classical writers, thereby laying the foundations of textual criticism (Tatakis 1977, p. 214, Vakalopoulos 1974, p. 92). Scientific thought, too, became more serious and sought to achieve a methodical structure for science, though still under the influence of antiquity (Tatakis 1977, p. 214). Even when the end of the empire was drawing nigh, the passion for studying and copying ancient Greek texts remained undiminished.

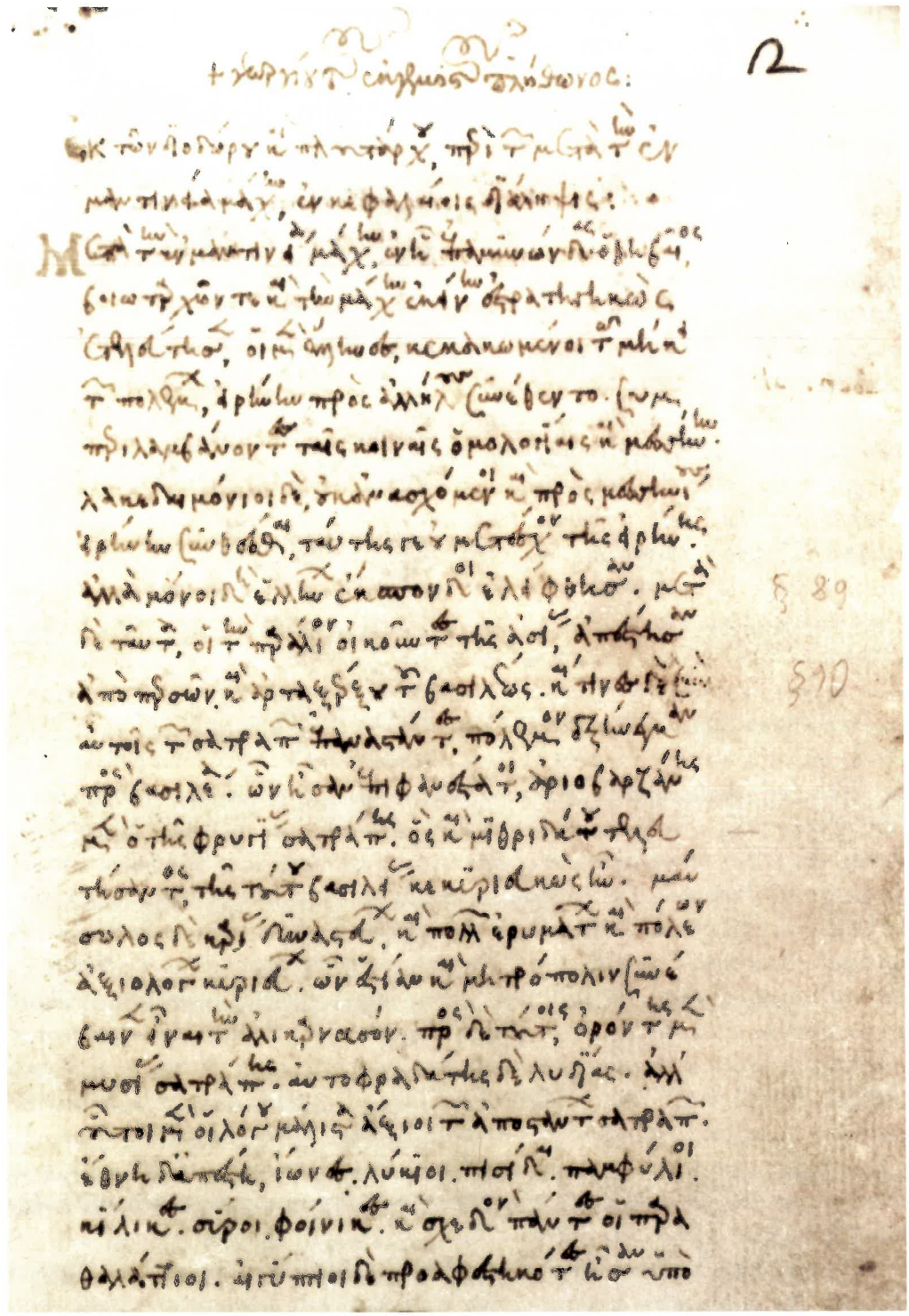
Study of the Classics also inculcated in the Byzantines an awareness of their Greek identity, their historical role, and their importance (Tatakis 1977, p. 215), ideas which found their first expression in the writing of the Mystras philosopher George Gemistos Plethon. Moreover, the sphere of Greek language, literature and thought, which at this period acquired great value in the minds of the cultural elite of western Europe, was the only one in which the Byzantine still enjoyed an undisputed superiority, and this made a major contribution to an awareness of their Greek identity (Browning 1992, pp. 302-303).

Another contributing factor in the renaissance and advance of Byzantine thought was the challenge to Byzantine cultural supremacy, which had hitherto been secure, since there were no other intellectual movements with which it could be compared (Beck 1992, p. 180). The West was gradually awakening and an increasing number of works of Latin literature were to be found in the Byzantine empire, many of them also in Greek translations (Beck 1992, p. 181).

The cultural renaissance experienced by Byzantium assumed its distinctive character thanks to the creation and growth of centres of letters outside Constantinople (Nicaea, Trebizond, Thessalonike, Mystras, etc.), though the capital naturally retained its leading role. This fragmentation was unprecedented in the empire and contributed to the dissemination of ideas and the broadening of the group of educated people.

180. Autograph of Georgios Gemistos Plethon,
(cod. Marc. Gr. Z 406 (=791), fol. 2r). 15th c.
Italy, Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

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Many men of learning were at the same time politicians, officials, senior civil servants, and even emperors, who usually placed greater importance on their intellectual activity than on affairs of state (Browning 1992, p. 303).

The troubled times experienced by the empire (civil wars, external threats, etc.), and especially the efforts at religious, and frequently also political, rapprochement with the West (movement for the unification of the Churches, etc.), had a pronounced effect on intellectual life and thought and led to the formation of rival intellectual currents.

Two major such currents co-existed in intellectual life and had a definitive influence on Byzantine thought and policy. On the one hand, humanist thought attempted "through a fertile contact with Greek philosophy to enrich the religion doctrine with the human word" (Svoronos 1987, p. 142). The adherents of this movement sought a rapprochement with the West, and even the unification of the two Churches. There were different trends amongst them, however. The first sought to reconcile the differences between the Greeks and the Latins, without abandoning the Greek Orthodox tradition (George Akropolites, Maximos Planoudes, Theodore Metochites, etc.) (Browning 1992, p. 310). A second trend drew so close to western thought that many of its followers espoused Roman Catholicism (Demetrios Kydones, etc.), and some even rose to senior levels in the Roman Catholic Church (Cardinal Bessarion, Cardinal Isidore, etc.). There was also a small group who essentially rejected the church and sought to revive ancient Greek models (Gemistos Plethon, etc.).

At the opposite extreme from the current described above stands ecclesiastical conservatism, which attempted to preserve Orthodoxy from pro-unification "schismatics" and Classicising scholars and philosophers (Nicholas Kabasilas, George Scholarios, etc.). The main exponent of this current was the Hesychast movement led by Gregorios Palamas. The Hesychasts sought for tranquillity (hesychia) through strict asceticism, by which they would achieve "indirect and visionary knowledge of God" (Svoronos 1987, p. 143). They regarded the writings of the church as the only source of truth, through which alone it was possible to interpret anything of concern to scientific or philosophical thought. The characteristic features of Hesychasm were a pronounced mysticism and anti-rationalism, and it was critical toward those who studied the Classical writers any more than was essential to an understanding of Christian doctrine (Browning 1992, p. 314). The scholars who made use of ancient Greek philosophy did so selectively and in a biased fashion, in order to reinforce their own arguments in favour of Orthodox Christianity (Triantari 1999).

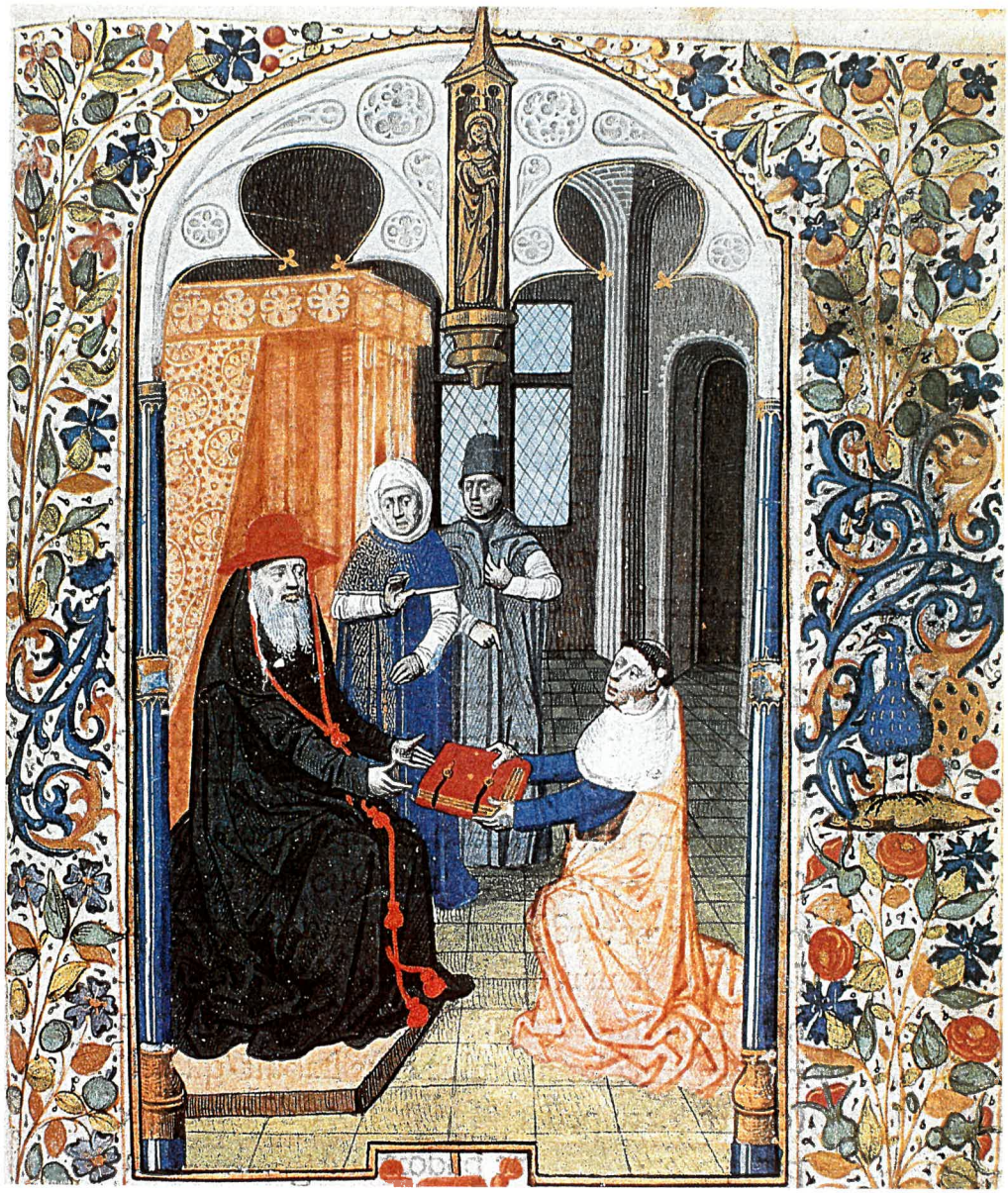
At the same time, another conflict of a philosophical character was in progress between the supporters of Aristotelian and Platonist philosophy. Aristotelian

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181. Bessarion as a cardinal. Detail of the picture no. 182.

182. Portrait of Bessarion as a cardinal. The humanist Guillaume Fichet offers him his treatise on rhetoric. Miniature (cod. 33, fol. 1r). 1471. Italy, Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.



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thought was the basis of Scholasticism which, in the form found at that period, was characterised by a spirit of creativity with regard only to its type and form, not its content (Theodorakopoulos 1975, p. 68). Scholasticism, which first appeared in the West though it was later embraced also by the Byzantines, was, of course, based on the thought of Aristotle as encountered by the West through Arabic and Latin translations of his teaching, which were frequently misleading. Platonism, in contrast, sought "to secure the independence of thought and liberate it from doctrine" (Tatakis 1977, p. 216). It was the means to liberate the mind from Scholastic authoritarianism (Theodorakopoulos 1975, p. 74). The followers of Aristotelian Scholasticism were drawn mainly from conservative ecclesiastical circles, in contrast with Platonist philosophy, which gave expression to the more liberal spirits of the period.

Mystras occupied a special position in this major intellectual flowering. As early as the time of the foundation of the town, intellectuals (Bishop Nikephoros Moschopoulos, Abbot Pachomios, etc.) had made their home in the region and showed a great desire for its cultural advancement. After the foundation of the

despotate, the despots themselves normally invited to it a circle of scholars who were maintained at the court. Many also sought refuge at Mystras for the greater security it provided against the Turkish threat. This intellectual movement reached its culmination in the first half of the 15th century, when the great philosopher George Gemistos Plethon came to live at Mystras and founded his school there. George Gemistos Plethon came from Constantinople to Mystras, where a suitable cultural environment had already been created for him to express his philosophical views and intellectual concerns. He was the main exponent of the Greek character of the Byzantine empire, and the undisputed leader of Platonism. Plethon sought the salvation and regeneration of Greek Byzantium in Classical beliefs, and in his preoccupation with ancient Greek literature, which already exercised considerable influence on Byzantine thought. He noted the predominant role played by the ancient Greek tradition in Byzantine society, and proclaimed: We are Greeks by descent, as our speech and ancestral education and culture attests *(Soldatos 1973, pp. 34-37, Oikonomides 1987, pp. 251-252, Benakis 2000, pp. 28-29).*

Plethon attempted to distance Byzantine society from the static nature of the Christian tradition, which he sought to replace with the rules of ancient Greek thought. He revealed and presented to his contemporaries the ideas of antiquity, which were to be the spark for the rapid development of the sciences, philosophy and art in the West during the years that followed (Theodorakopoulos 1975, p. 75). In 1438, during his visit to Italy as a member of the retinue of the emperor John VIII Palaiologos attending the Council of Ferrara-Florence, his lectures on Platonism exercised a great influence on the questing minds of the West and laid the basis for the victory of Platonism over Aristotelianism. This movement was reinforced by his pupils, who took up residence in the West in the years both before and after the Fall of Constantinople, taking their Greek education with them. Amongst these were Bessarion, Manuel Chrysoloras, Charitonymos Hermonymos, Laonikos Chalkokondyles and Michael Apostoles.

After their capture of Constantinople in 1204, Westerners came into closer contact with Byzantine civilisation and Byzantine thought when they established themselves on the territories of the empire. Many of them learned Greek and attempted to penetrate the methods and spirit by which the Byzantines understood the Classical writers (Tatakis 1977, p. 215). In the private, public and ecclesiastical libraries of the empire could be found manuscripts, which they frequently bought and took to the West, or copies of which they commissioned in the vast number of scriptoria that functioned. This contact was later extended through the movements for the unification of the two Churches and the visits made by Byzantine emperors to western Europe in search of allies to counter the Turkish threat.

From the late 14th century onwards, Byzantine men of letters visited the West, especially the Italian states, and frequently took up residence there, taking Greek manuscripts with them. It is worth noting the donation of the extensive library of Cardinal Bessarion to the Republic of San Marco, by the cardinal himself (Geanakoplos 1989, pp. 25, 58); this formed the kernel of the Marcian library. Greek scholars also staffed the Italian universities, into which they breathed new life. Some of them, like Bessarion, promoted Latin translations of, or wrote commentaries on, ancient Greek texts, thereby making them more accessible to Westerners (Geanakoplos 1989, pp. 61, 79-80). The flow of Byzantine scholars to the West, equipped with their humanist training, was particularly strong during the 15th century, and coincided with the emergence and development of the Western Renaissance. Manuel Chrysoloras, John Argyropoulos, Theodore Gazes, Demetrios Chalkokondyles and many others, members of the Byzantine cultural "establishment", overcame their prejudices against the western world and brought to the West their ancient Greek heritage (Browning 1992, p. 311). Westerners, emerging from a "centuries-long lethargy", were now prepared to receive and cultivate the "life-giving seeds of Greek-Byzantine civilisation" (Vakalopoulos 1985, p. 41).

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33 Codex Gr. 198 (= 744) of the Marcian Library

Manuscript

Third quarter of the 15th century

Parchment

265x185 mm.

Fol. 324 (vi + 306 + ii) Single column

Minuscule script

Contents: (fol. 1-2v.) Andronikos Kallistos, Carmen in Bessarionum. *Bessarion, (fol. 3-241v)* In calumniatorem Platonis, *(fol. 243-294)* Correctio interpretationis Georgii Trapezuntii in libros Platonis de legibus, *(fol. 294v-316v)* De natura et arte contra eundem Trapezuntium

Venice, Marcian Library

The codex Gr. 198 (= 744) of the Marcian Library contains works written by Bessarion in Latin in which he replies to the treatise by Georgios Trapezountios *Comparationes Philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis* which is an attempt to rebut the ideas of Plethon. The tract *In calumniatorem Platonis* ('against the critic of Plato') deals with the life, work and views of Plethon and is an attempt to initiate the West into his ideas. It consists of four books, originally written in Greek (Monfasani 1995, II, p. 165), and is considered to be a vindication of Plato's philosophy, of which it presents a full picture to the West for the first time (Bartzeliotis 2000, pp. 35-36). In it, Bessarion succeeds in reconciling the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, whom 'the fanaticism and bigotry of the theologians and philologists of the time had turned against each other' (Vakalopoulos 1974, pp. 389-390), and in demonstrating that ultimately, the views of the two philosophers were in general agreement with each other. The manuscript was probably copied between the years 1464 and 1472, a

period that saw the most prolific output of works written in Latin by Bessarion himself. Before 1464, the only works by him available in Latin were three translations of Basil the Great, Aristotle and Xenophon and two of his orations (Monfasani 1995, II, pp. 166-167).
The manuscript was originally attributed to the scribe Georgios Trivizas, but is now thought to have been entirely the work of the scholar Andronikos Kallistos. Andronikos Kallistos (1400-1486) fled to the West after the fall of Constantinople and taught in the universities of Bologna, Rome, Florence, Paris and London. With him began the systematic teaching of Greek literature in France.
A note on page 2 refers to the owner of the manuscript, Bessarion, cardinal and titular Latin Patriarch of Constantinople. After this there are notes in the cardinal's own hand. Page 3 has a vignette with Bessarion's coat-of-arms.
Bessarion was born and grew up in Trebizond. He later settled in Constantinople, where he took the monk's habit. He began his studies in the capital and completed them at Mystras under George Gemistos Plethon. His study of Platonic philosophy under the great master significantly affected the formation of his personality and his philosophical thought. He was connected by ties of friendship with the despots of Mystras and the imperial family.
Bessarion took part in the Council of Ferrara and Florence (1438-39) as a member of the Greek delegation, in his capacity as metropolitan bishop of Nikaia. During the course of the Council's work, he was distinguished by his gentleness and moderation and "had an enchanting nobility of manner, clarity of view and maturity of expression" (Vakalopoulos 1974, p. 390). By the end of the Council he was a fervent supporter of the unification of the two Churches. He soon returned to Italy, joined the Roman Catholic Church and was ordained cardinal.
The palace in Rome provided for him by the Pope became a centre of humanist studies, the famous Academy of Bessarion. It was a meeting place for many Greek men of learning in Italy, such as Michael Apostolis, Georgios Trapezountios, Theodoros Gazis and Andronikos Kallistos, as well as distinguished Western representatives of humanism (Poggio Bracciolini, Lorenzo Valla, and others).
Bessarion's energies were concentrated mainly on collecting and translating ancient Greek literature and the works of the Church Fathers, and on the dissemination of Greek letters in general throughout the whole of Italy. The library he created was one of the richest of his period and eventually formed the kernel of the Marcian Library in Venice (see also entry no. 34).
Bessarion, the Greek philosopher, theologian, patron of letters and writer, emerged in the West as an eminent representative of humanism and a "devotee of the Renaissance" (Pheidas 1984, pp. 170-171). His activity and work made a significant contribution to the revival of Platonism in the West. H. Vast writes of the Greek scholar: "Bessarion lived between two ages... He was an enthusiastic admirer of the ancient world and contributed more than any other to the birth of the new era... He dominated his time, which he urged ardently to follow the new paths of progress and Renaissance" (Vasiliev 1971, pp. 458-459).

Publications: Bessarione 1994.

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34 Codex Lat. 339 (= 1550) of the Marcian Library

Manuscript
Third quarter of the 15th century
Paper
285×197 mm.
Fol. 76
Single column
Minuscule script
Contents: (fol. 3-48v) Hero, De re militari. *Demosthenes, (fol. 67-73v),* Olinthiaca
Venice, Marcian Library

The codex Lat. 339 (=1550) of the Marcian Library contains works of ancient Greek literature translated into Latin: *the De re militari* of Hero of Byzantium and the *Olinthiaca* of Demosthenes. It also contains miniatures with depictions of war machines. The translation of the two works was by the Greek Ioannis Sophianos, who was also the scribe of the manuscript. Sophianos's translation of the former of the two works is also to be found in other manuscripts in Italy.
A note on page 3 refers to the owner of the manuscript, Cardinal Bessarion. The manuscript was probably written between 1458 and 1463, when Pius II Piccolomini was Pope. During this period the translation of Hero was commissioned for the first time by Lelio della Valle (plut. XLV 18, fol. 76-100, Florence, Laurentian Library). The codex Lat. 339 (= 1550) was then copied for Bessarion. Since the note in the manuscript refers to Bessarion as cardinal, it is believed to have come into his possession before 1463, the year in which he also assumed the office of titular Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, though this is not, of course, a firm basis for dating the manuscript.

Ioannis Sophianos probably came to the West after the fall of Constantinople. He espoused the Latin language, which he praises, and was active as a translator and copyist in Rome.
After Bessarion settled in Italy, he began to collect Greek manuscripts and at the same time promoted the translation into Latin of some of the Classics and the Church Fathers. The library he created is considered the richest and most important of the Renaissance libraries (Geanakoplos 1989, p. 22). When he bequeathed it to the Republic of Venice in 1472 it numbered 800-900 manuscripts, of which 600 were in Greek (Vakalopoulos 1974, pp. 390-392). It essentially formed the kernel of the later Marcian Library (Vasiliev 1971, p. 457, Talbot 1991, p. 285). Many of the Greek manuscripts in it were collected by Greek men of learning who were sent by Bessarion himself to Trebizond, Alexandropolis, Athens, Thessalonike, Ainos, Kallipolis and elsewhere, after the fall of Constantinople. Bessarion's concern was to render the Greek works as accurately as possible into Latin, and to put an end to the study of Arabic translations, which were frequently erroneous (Geanakoplos 1989, p. 22). In his desire for accuracy, he sought out the oldest manuscripts, which were as close as possible to the original (Geanakoplos 1989, p, 33). It was for this reason that Bessarion's manuscripts were used by the famous Hellenist Aldus Manutius for the publications printed at his press in Venice (Vakalopoulos 1974, pp. 390-392). Bessarion himself states the purpose of collecting all these manuscripts in his will: *if today there are a few Greeks somewhere, and if in future they achieve*





something else (and much can be achieved over a long time) –to have a place they can find all that has been written in our language (the one we use today, of course), all gathered together in a safe place, and, having found them, multiply them (Vakalopoulos 1974, pp. 390-392). Bessarion also strove all his life, in the end unsuccessfully, to persuade the West to enter into alliances and engage in crusades against the Turks. Tracts, memoranda, appeals and letters written by Bessarion circulated in the major urban centres, and he personally travelled and argued in city councils and at the courts of rulers for the necessity of such initiatives. His continual, strenuous efforts met with a response only at the Papal court, but the age of the Crusades was now past. Conflicts between the states of Western Europe, and civil strife between the Italian states, particularly Venice, as well as their interests in the East, prevented the concluding of such an agreement (Chasiotis 1974, pp. 253-254).

Publications: Bessarione 1994.

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Abbreviations

ABME	*Archeion ton Byzantinon Mnemeion tes Hellados*
AD	*Achaiologikon Deltion*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
BCH	*Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*
BF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens*
CahArch	*Cahiers Archéologiques*
CFHB	*Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*
DChAE	*Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EEBS	*Epeteris Hetaireias Byzantinon Spoudon*
IEE	*Historia tou Hellenikou Ethnous*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca, Migne J.-P. (ed.), 161 vol., Paris 1857-1866*
RbK	*Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*
REB	*Revue des Études Byzantines*
REG	*Revue des Études Grecques*

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